

HEAVEN ON EARTH

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TEMPLES, RITUAL, AND COSMIC SYMBOLISM IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

edited by

DEENA RAGAVAN

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PREFACE

The present volume is the result of the eighth annual University of Chicago Oriental Institute Seminar, held in Breasted Hall on Friday, March 2, and Saturday, March 3, 2012. Over the course of the two days, seventeen speakers, from both the United States and abroad, examined the interconnections among temples, ritual, and cosmology from a variety of regional specializations and theoretical perspectives. Our eighteenth participant, Julia Hegewald, was absent due to unforeseen circumstances, but fortunately her contribution still appears as part of this volume.

The 2012 seminar aimed to revisit a classic topic, one with a long history among scholars of the ancient world: the cosmic symbolism of sacred architecture. Bringing together archaeologists, art historians, and philologists working not only in the ancient Near East, but also Mesoamerica, Greece, South Asia, and China, we hoped to re-evaluate the significance of this topic across the ancient world. The program comprised six sessions, each of which focused on the different ways the main themes of the seminar could interact. The program was organized thematically, to encourage scholars of different regional or methodological specializations to communicate and compare their work. The two-day seminar was divided into two halves, each half culminating in a response to the preceding papers. This format, with some slight rearrangement, is followed in the present work.

Our goal was to share ideas and introduce new perspectives in order to equip scholars with new questions or theoretical and methodological tools. The topic generated considerable interest and enthusiasm in the academic community, both at the Oriental Institute and more broadly across the University of Chicago, as well as among members of the general public. The free exchange of ideas and, more importantly, the wide range of perspectives offered left each of us with potential avenues of research and new ideas, as well as a fresh outlook on our old ones.

I'd like to express my gratitude to all those who have contributed so much of their time and energy to ensuring this seminar and volume came together. In particular, I'd like to thank Gil Stein, the Director of the Oriental Institute, for this wonderful opportunity, and Chris Woods, for his guidance through the whole process. Thanks also to Theo van den Hout, Andrea Seri, Christopher Faraone, Walter Farber, Bruce Lincoln, and Janet Johnson, for chairing the individual sessions of the conference. I'd like to thank all the staff of the Oriental Institute, including Steve Camp, D'Ann Condes, Kristin Derby, Emma Harper, Anna Hill, and Anna Ressman; particular thanks to John Sanders, for the technical support, and Meghan Winston, for coordinating the catering. A special mention must go to Mariana Perlina, without whom the organization and ultimate success of this seminar would have been impossible. I do not think I can be grateful enough to Tom Urban, Leslie Schramer, and everyone else in the publications office, not only for the beautiful poster and program, but also for all the work they have put into editing and producing this book. Most of all, my thanks go out to all of the participants, whose hard work, insight, and convivial discussion made this meeting and process such a pleasure, both intellectually and personally.

Deena Ragavan



Seminar participants, from left to right: Top row: John Baines, Davíd Carrasco, Susanne Görke;
Middle row: Matthew Canepa, Uri Gabbay, Gary Beckman, Elizabeth Frood, Claus Ambos;
Bottom row: Yorke Rowan, Ömür Harmanşah, Betsey Robinson, Michael Meister, Tracy Miller, Karl
Taube, Clemente Marconi; Front: Deena Ragavan. Not pictured: Julia Hegewald and Richard Neer

THE TRANSFORMATION OF SACRED SPACE, TOPOGRAPHY, AND ROYAL RITUAL IN PERSIA AND THE ANCIENT IRANIAN WORLD

Matthew P. Canepa, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

The Problem of an Iranian Temple Tradition

In contrast to the other ancient Western Asian cultures treated in this volume, the ancient Iranian world did not develop a unified tradition of temple architecture that evolved continuously through all periods.¹ It is important to assert this at the outset because throughout the last century scholars have repeatedly posited, and often attempted to reconstruct, a trans-millennial tradition of Iranian temple architecture, that is, a tradition of architecture built to house a cult image in the manner of a Babylonian, Elamite, or Greek temple, or a sacred, ever-burning fire in the manner of a late antique or medieval Zoroastrian fire temple. Scholarship from the last century either imposed reconstructed visions of a primordial “Aryan” temple, or took late antique or even modern Zoroastrian fire temples and fire cult as normative and vainly sought these imagined or anachronistic architectural or ritual forms in the archaeological evidence. A rotating cast of structures were enlisted as potential Achaemenid fire temples, including the so-called *āyadana* at Susa, the *Ka'ba-ye Zardošt* at Naqš-e Rostam, the *Zendān-e Solaymān* and the mudbrick terrace of the “Sacred Precinct” at Pasargadae, various structures at Persepolis including Xerxes I’s “Gate of Nations,” the courtyard of the *hadiš*, *Kuh-e K̄wāja* in Sīstān, and *Takht-e Solaymān* in Iranian Azerbaijan. Scholarship often tried to explain the sites’ divergent heterogeneity of architectural forms through multiple social, functional, or, in the cases of Nazi-era scholarship, racial categories.²

¹ This divergence is manifest in the catalog of sites collected by Shenkar 2007 and 2011. While some archaeological literature restricts “Iran” or “Iranian” to sites within the Islamic Republic of Iran or the geographical expanse of the Iranian plateau, in the field of ancient Iranian studies and this paper, “Iranian” also includes the overlapping Iranian linguistic and cultural spheres that extended beyond the borders of the modern nation-state or geographical region. This encompasses peoples who spoke an Iranian language (Av. *airiia-*/OPers. *airiya-*/MPers. *ēr-*/Bactrian *aria*), and often designated their homelands as an “Iranian Land” (e.g., Av. *Airyānam vaējō*, MPers. *Ērānwēz*). These Iranian peoples or their rulers further identified themselves according to the region they inhabited (Persian, Parthian), or their dynasty

(Achaemenid, Arsacid, Kushan, Sasanian, etc.). In addition, large parts of the former Achaemenid empire were ruled by former satrapal dynasties who cultivated their Iranian roots and culture, though the majority of the peoples they ruled were not (e.g., Orontid Armenia).

² For example, Erdmann argued the *āyadana* at Susa represented a “popular” tradition of architecture and fire cult (*Stadtheiligtum*) while the *Ka'ba-ye Zardošt* and *Zendān-e Solaymān* represented “courtly” fire temples (*Hofheiligtum*) of the Persian elite (Erdmann 1941, p. 22). Boyce posited the existence of a discrete split between “fire temples” and “image temples,” and that creedal differences lay behind them (Boyce 1975b, p. 456; 1982, pp. 216–31; Boyce and Grenet 1991, p. 74). Strzygowski sought

Although they might have disagreed on finer points, various strains of scholarship wove these disparate structures together into a linear, developmental architectural and religious tradition and traced its influence thence into non-Iranian architectural and religion.³

All the sites cited as the earliest Persian fire temples by these earlier strains of scholarship have since proven to have served something other than a fire cult, to have been built well after the Achaemenid era, or both. Of these, scholarship depended particularly heavily on the so-called *āyadana* at Susa, as it was the only site thought to be from the Achaemenid era that presented a structure that appeared to match later, post-Achaemenid ground plans.⁴ It served as the lynchpin. The late nineteenth-century explorer and self-taught archaeologist Marcel-Auguste Dieulafoy explored this structure using primitive methodologies.⁵ Dieulafoy arrived at an Achaemenid date primarily because the structure incorporated Achaemenid column bases and rested on a gravel foundation, a building technique now known to have persisted in the region through well into the Parthian era.⁶ Later analysis of the site's ceramics and architectural members by more competent archaeologists revealed that the structure in fact dates to the late Seleukid or early Parthian period (ca. second century B.C.E.) and merely incorporated mismatched Achaemenid bases spoliated from nearby Susa.⁷ Although this evidentiary cornerstone has long since been removed, the scholarly edifice built on it has only recently fully collapsed.

Paralleling this largely Western European debate and later spliced with it, mid- to late twentieth-century Soviet archaeology put forth a heterogeneous grouping of sites and structures as contenders for the title of earliest Iranian fire temple. These include the mid-second-to early first-millennium sites of Jarkutan in northern Bactria (Uzbekistan); Togolok-1, Togolok-21, and Gonur in Margiana (Turkmenistan); and a structure from an earlier level of Kazakl'i-yatkan, all associated with the Bactria Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC).⁸ Just as contemporary scholarly consensus has rejected the excavators' attempts to connect the BMAC with early Iranian or Indo-Iranian culture, none of the early "fire temples" from Bactria, Margiana, and Chorasmia show evidence of Iranians or Iranian cults.⁹ Needless to say, these sites have nothing to do with "Zoroastrian" cult.

an essential "Aryan" architectural form in Iranian fire temples, a centralized structure built on a "radiating" plan (*strahlenförmige Grundriss*) that could be discerned in the architecture of any "Aryan" people, from Armenians to Germans (Strzygowski 1927, 1935; Maranci 1998).

³ Oelmann 1921; Strzygowski 1927, 1935; Godard 1938; Wachsmuth 1938; Erdmann 1941, pp. 11–22; Hinz 1942; Wikander 1946, pp. 58–71; Gullini 1964; Schippmann 1971; Boyce 1975a–b (among others); Yamamoto 1979, 1981; Azarnoush 1987; Choksy 2007. Eventually allied with similar endeavors in the Third Reich, some of these early scholars, such as Strzygowski, Hinz, and Wikander, studied Iranian religion and architecture as part of reconstructing a quintessential "Aryan" architecture. See Arvidsson 2006 and Maranci 1998 for historiographical context. Although he later indulged in the same sort of speculation, Herzfeld's early assessment in *Iranische Felsreliefs* is the only one that has stood the test of time:

"Schon für die sasanidische Zeit bleibt das Problem der Feuertempel sehr dunkel. Für die ältere Zeit, die achaemenidische, ist es völlig unlösbar" (Sarre and Herzfeld 1910, p. 239; cf. Herzfeld 1935, pp. 28, 44; Herzfeld 1941, pp. 215, 230, 301–06).

⁴ Oelmann 1921, pp. 278–79; Strzygowski 1927, p. 7; 1930, p. 455; Godard 1938, pp. 12–13; Wachsmuth 1938; Erdmann 1941, pp. 15–18, 75; Wikander 1946, pp. 70–71; Gullini 1964, pp. 264–68; Schippmann 1971, pp. 466–515.

⁵ Amiet 1995.

⁶ Dieulafoy 1890–1892, vol. 4, pp. 411–19.

⁷ Ghirshman 1976, vol. 1, pp. 197–200; Stronach 1985, pp. 619–21.

⁸ Reviewed most recently in Shenkar 2007.

⁹ Anthony 2007, pp. 421–37 and p. 505 n. 42; Bakels 2003. In general, the methods by which these sites were excavated and interpreted were primitive and proceeded without regard for stratigraphy or recording (Salvatori 2003, 2007, 2008).

Without clear archaeological evidence, a variety of textual sources were then enlisted to reconstruct an Iranian temple tradition, despite internal contradictions, anachronism, and lack of specificity.¹⁰ These textual sources have often overshadowed the authentic archaeological and epigraphic evidence. The various components of the Avesta contain no mention of temples, fire or otherwise, even in its youngest sections. A variety of conflicting classical sources have commonly been cited as proof that early Iranian religions did not use temples, or dismissed as uninformed by those who sought an ancient tradition. Neither approach, it turns out, is entirely true. The first, and most influential for both ancient and modern authors, is Herodotus. In a short excursus, Herodotus describes “Persian” religion, by which he means the religious customs of several Iranian peoples. He famously states: “It is not [the Persians’] custom to set up statues, temples (*nēous*) or altars, but consider those who do to be foolish” (*Histories* 1.131–40). A handful of later classical authors, some writing before the fall of the Achaemenids, show the influence of, or at least do not contradict, Herodotus, stressing that the Persians sacrifice in open air.¹¹

While it neither mentions “temples” (*naos*) nor “sanctuaries” (*hieron*), a fragment of the *Babylonika* of Berossos, a Babylonian priest who wrote a history of Babylon in Greek for Antiochos I (281–61 B.C.E.), has been especially important for scholarly debate on Persian religion.¹² The passage states:

[The Persians, the Medes and the Magi] did not believe in wooden or stone images of the gods but in fire and water like the philosophers. Later, however, after many years they began to worship statues in human form as Berossus reports in the third book of his Chaldaean history. Artaxerxes, the son of Darius, the son of Ochus, introduced this practice. He was the first to set up an image of Aphrodite Anaitis [Anāhitā] in Babylon and to require such worship from the Susians, Ecbatanians, Persians and Bactrians and from Damascus and Sardis.¹³

Berossos only mentions that Artaxerxes II introduced the veneration of statues (*agalmata*) of the goddess Anāhitā, not temples. Nevertheless, scholars repeatedly used this passage as the basis for arguing that: 1) Artaxerxes II introduced temples into Persian religion and, occasionally, that 2) these temples housed a fire cult along with a cult statue.

The dominant interpretation of these texts that continues to affect scholarship arises from the arguments of Stig Wikander and Mary Boyce. They, and those who followed them, generally accepted Herodotus and held that the Persians did not use temples until the time of Artaxerxes II. Wikander argued that a cult of fire “must have” joined Artaxerxes II’s image cult of Anāhitā in a temple since he believed this to be the primordial Iranian cult.¹⁴ According to Wikander this combination thus created the first “fire temples.” Building on earlier scholarship, most notably that of Kurt Erdmann (1941), he assumed that this late Achaemenid temple architecture established a pan-Iranian tradition that evolved continuously through

¹⁰ Reviewed critically in de Jong 1997, pp. 343–52.

¹¹ Dino of Kolophon, FrGrH 690 F 28 (Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 5.65.1). Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.7.3. Influence of Herodotus noted in, among others, Cicero, *De Republica* 3.9.14 and *De Legibus* 2.10.26, and Strabo, *Geographia* 15.3.13. See below for further discussion of the Roman sources.

¹² Wikander 1946, p. 61.

¹³ Burstein 1978, p. 29, 5.2. In addition, some have argued that Yašt 5 lines 126–29 appears to contain an inserted section written in the Achaemenid era that describes the iconography of a cult statue of Anāhitā; see de Jong 1997, p. 272.

¹⁴ Wikander 1946, p. 60. On the context of his scholarship, see Arvidsson 2006, p. 234.

the Sasanian era. While generally accepting Wikander's interpretation of Berossos, in the late twentieth century Mary Boyce, the influential scholar of the history of Zoroastrianism, hypothesized that a rival temple cult of fire that excluded images "must have" emerged from an offended orthodox Zoroastrian community to counter Artaxerxes II's introduction of statues and, presumably, temples.¹⁵ This, she argued, was the genesis of the true Zoroastrian fire temple, a tradition that she argued persisted in purity alongside the heterodox "image temples" until the Sasanians suppressed the worship of cult statues in late antiquity. Despite the persistent influence of Wikander and, especially, Boyce, no archaeological or indigenous textual evidence of any kind corroborates their claims that grand, officially sponsored Achaemenid Zoroastrian fire temples were the genesis of a pan-Iranian tradition of temple architecture. In addition, while the Achaemenid royal inscriptions show the prominence of the god Auramazdā and impact of Avestan concepts, it is abundantly clear that the Achaemenids did not adhere to anything approaching orthodox Zoroastrianism, which is a late antique and early medieval phenomenon. While the Achaemenids themselves would not have necessarily used either term, it makes more sense to speak of Achaemenid "Mazdaism" instead of Achaemenid "Zoroastrianism," which would be an overt anachronism.

A much different pattern emerges when one applies a more disciplined approach with emphasis on credible archaeological evidence and indigenous textual and epigraphic sources. The recent revolution in Achaemenid studies made possible by the study of the Persepolis Fortification Archive has greatly augmented the body of authentic, indigenous evidence available and has provided a salutary correction and reorientation to the field.¹⁶ This paper explores the development of Iranian sacred space, topography, architecture, and royal ritual. It focuses primarily on the Achaemenid period and examines continuities and, just as importantly, new developments and changes in Seleukid Iran (310–141 B.C.E.) and the Arsacid empire (ca. 238 B.C.E.–ca. 224 C.E.) until the Sasanian era (224–642 C.E.). In doing so, it reorients debate away from reconstructing a continuous, linked architectural and ritual tradition, which is not indicated in the evidence. Instead this paper calls attention to the abundant evidence we do have of Iranian sacred spaces and ritual and the constant, creative tension between continuity, massive ruptures, and innovation that characterize it.

Religious Architecture in Iran and Iranian Religions before the Achaemenids

The first temples that appear in a region and in a time period securely inhabited by Iranians, and thus likely built and used by Iranians, were excavated at the site of Tepe Nuš-e Jān in Media. The site yielded evidence of two temples, the "Central Temple" and "Western Temple," which were in use sometime during the seventh century B.C.E. (fig. 14.1).¹⁷ The exterior of the Central Temple presented an elaborate, roughly symmetrical cruciform shape, while the Western Temple had an irregular ground plan formed from two rectangular sections of different size joined together. Although the ground plans of the two structures diverge, they

¹⁵ Boyce 1975b, p. 456; 1982, pp. 216–31; Boyce and Grenet 1991, p. 74.

¹⁶ It is not too strong to say that Henkelman (2008) is in a large part responsible for this correction. Garrison (forthcoming) provides a similar valuable

reorientation with regards to Achaemenid visual culture. Shenkar's recent recataloging (2007, 2011) of temples provides a very important reassessment of the archaeological evidence.

¹⁷ Stronach and Roaf 2007, pp. 213–17.

shared a number of internal features that indicate their architects and patrons intended them to serve a similar cultic tradition. Both temples have a single entrance, an entrance corridor, an antechamber with a spiral ramp leading to a second story above the antechamber, a large central sanctuary decorated with niches, a lockable door to the sanctuary, and a single freestanding fire holder located to the left of the entrance to the sanctuary.¹⁸ The excavators recovered no evidence of the deity or deities honored at the temples. Only the altar might suggest a relationship with ancient Iranian religious traditions, although this is far from conclusive.¹⁹ While the shape of the altar, roughly square with a stepped fire capital, evokes later Achaemenid fire altars, the Central Temple's fire holder was made of plastered mudbrick versus stone. In contrast to remains and sculptural portrayals of Achaemenid fire holders, the shaft of that of Tepe Nuš-e Jān was very short, raising the top of the altar only .85 meters from floor level. At the end of its life, the Central Temple was decommissioned and carefully sealed up by filling it with shale and immuring the top of the walls with brick, a procedure that recalls Mesopotamian decommissioning practices.²⁰ The altar was given special attention to ensure that it was protected. A small .80-meter-high mudbrick wall was built around it and the space between the altar and the protecting wall was carefully filled with shale fragments.²¹

The external features of these temples recall aspects of Urartian temples, and their offset sanctuary entrances evoke the Elamite temples from Čoḡā Zanbīl, which are among the few Elamite temples that have been excavated. While certain features, such as a divided inner sanctuary and niches, vaguely parallel those features in Mesopotamian temples, neither presents the typical Mesopotamian straight-axis *Langraum* ground plan, nor did their cultic furniture recall Mesopotamian temple furnishings.²² The exterior plan and tower-like appearance of the Central Temple vaguely evoke Urartian temples, but the overall design of the temples finds no ready parallel at any other site.²³ Their architectural traditions grew from ancient Western Asian architectural traditions generally but were not rooted in any one exclusively.

While Boyce dismissed them entirely, preferring to explain them away as foreign temples introduced by a Median king's non-Iranian queen, others have proclaimed the temples the first unquestionably orthodox Zoroastrian fire temples.²⁴ Neither of these absolutist pronouncements were based on the archaeological evidence, but were arrived at by comparing the structures positively or negatively to late antique and medieval Zoroastrianism.²⁵ Though

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 197.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 82–83 and 210–11.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 88–91.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 88–89.

²² In contrast, the temple at Hasanlu, built ca. 1250 B.C.E. at a site south of Lake Orumiye, responded to this Mesopotamian/Syrian tradition. Unlike Tepe Nuš-e Jān, the city's inhabitants were not Iranians and the cult does not appear to have been an Iranian cult (Dyson and Voigt 2003).

²³ Stronach and Roaf 2007, pp. 198, 211–12; Tourovets 2005.

²⁴ Boyce largely downplayed or ignored this scholarship as it emerged in the later part of her career. She strenuously argued that the temples served

non-Iranian gods, largely since they did not fit into her chronology, not because of the archaeological evidence (Boyce 1982, pp. 36–37).

²⁵ See Shenkar's assessment of Azarnoush 1987 and Choksy 2007 (Shenkar 2007, p. 173). In addition to being methodologically unsound considering we have very little primary source evidence on early Zoroastrian practice, retrojecting late antique Zoroastrianism does not make sense in light of scholarship's growing consensus that Zoroaster indeed flourished in the late seventh to early sixth century B.C.E., after the construction of these structures (Gnoli 2000, p. 165; 2003). Azarnoush (1987) argued that the roughly cruciform shape of the Central Temple matched that of the palace at Bišāpūr and, because of this alone, they shared the same function.

they did not provide sufficient evidence to identify the exact nature of the cults they hosted, the temples at Tepe Nuš-e Jān clearly show that some Medes adopted architecture for cultic purposes and this may have had some relationship to Iranian religiosity. They are important insofar as they force scholars to nuance and reconsider the scope and accuracy of the claims of Herodotus and other classical sources. Most significantly, the architectural and cultic designs of the temples do not reappear in the Achaemenid era and did not ultimately contribute to a larger, continuous tradition of Iranian or Persian sacred architecture.²⁶

Achaemenid Ritual Practice and Sacred Architecture in Persia and the Iranian Plateau

Within the wider province of Pārsa, no evidence has emerged of a structure that was used as a Zoroastrian fire temple or a “house of a god” in the architectural and ritual tradition of a Mesopotamian or Elamite temple.²⁷ Similarly, past and current excavations around Susa, Ecbatana, Persepolis, and Pasargadae have not produced evidence of anything that resembles a temple dating to the Achaemenid era. The archaeological evidence suggests that the Achaemenid kings did not build temples in Iran. This contrasts sharply with royal traditions of patronage in Babylon, Assyria, and Elam as well as with evidence of the Achaemenids’ own patronage of non-Persian temples and cults in Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Egypt. Temple building and restoration were important royal practices in ancient Western Asia, especially prominent in Elam, the region whose people and culture most profoundly impacted and guided the genesis and development of the early Persian empire.²⁸ A wide variety of sacred structures flourished in Elamite religion and the pre-Achaemenid Elamite language contained a rich and nuanced vocabulary for various types of temples, shrines, and chapels.²⁹ The vast majority of these Elamite sacred structures are known only by the inscriptions on the bricks that once constituted them. While most Elamite temples are lost, the Middle Elamite site of Čoḡā Zanbil preserves the actual ground plans of a number of temples, which, by and large, relate to Mesopotamian architectural traditions.³⁰ This once widespread and important institution all but disappears after the rise of the Achaemenids. Indicative of this precipitous decline, no archaeological evidence of an Achaemenid-era, Elamite-style temple has yet emerged in Elam or Pārsa, be it an actual site or even just a few inscribed bricks.

Turning to the epigraphic sources, careful observers of Achaemenid sources have pointed out that Darius I never boasts of building or restoring temples in his royal inscriptions.³¹ The only mention of temples arises in a passage in the Elamite and Akkadian versions of his Bīsotūn inscription, which was written for the whole empire and disseminated widely. Here Darius I states that he rebuilt the sacred sites that Gaumata destroyed.³² The Elamite version calls these sites “temples,” as does the Akkadian version (Achaemenid Elamite ^{AN}zí-ia-an^{AN}: *ziyan*, lit., “places of seeing [the gods],” “temples”; Babylonian É. 『MEŠ』 šá DINGIR. MEŠ “houses of the gods”). While the Elamite and Akkadian versions agree, the Old Persian

²⁶ Boucharlat 1984, pp. 122–24. Contra Azarnoush 1987.

²⁷ Ghirshman 1968, pp. 9–41.

²⁸ Root 2010, p. 171; Boucharlat 2005.

³¹ Calmeyer 1992, p. 107; Potts 1999, p. 325; Root 2010, p. 171.

²⁹ Henkelman 2008.

³² DBp 1.63–4.

²⁹ Potts 2010; 2011, p. 815.

version, instead, chooses a more open-ended term from root *yad-* “to sacrifice”: āyadanā (“places of sacrifice,” “cult sites”).

Darius I does not distinguish these sacred sites ritually, geographically, or architecturally, despite the fact that he carefully recorded all other details of the rebellious lands elsewhere in his inscriptions. The mention of “temple restorations” joins a list of other wrongs that Darius I made right and like them was intended to be a generic and programmatic demonstration of good kingship rather than a specific record of individual restorations. Darius I disseminated the text of the inscription throughout the empire, with a fragmentary Aramaic version appearing in Egypt.³³ Old Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian versions of the text appear as monumental inscriptions alongside figural sculpture in a monument that was carved into the living rock at the site of Bisotūn in Media and installed along the sacred way of Babylon.³⁴ Darius I continued the Persian policy of subsidizing various cults throughout the empire after the re-conquest, many no doubt including temples. As a programmatic statement of good, divinely inspired kingship, this passage was adapted to the cultural idioms of the regions where it was sent.³⁵ Readers of the text would expect that the king would restore or purify a temple if he would act in accordance with the actions of ancient Elamite, Babylonian, or Egyptian royal precedent, while an open-air cult site would make sense within Iranian religious experience and landscape.

Taken altogether, the archaeological, archival, and epigraphic evidence presents one very important fact: while temples might have existed on the Iranian plateau, extensive temple building in the manner of the kings of Elam was one aspect of Elamite culture that the Achaemenids evidently did not apply in their home province of Pārsa.³⁶ Given the profound impact of Elamite culture on other aspects of Persian culture, this state of affairs might seem anomalous, but only if one assumes absolute continuity between Persian religion and pre-Achaemenid Elamite religion and with highland Elamo-Persian practices and those of the lowlands. While the Persian empire in general cultivated and reinvigorated many aspects of the previous eras’ religious practices, we have no evidence that the new Teispid and Achaemenid royal families of Pārsa continued the traditions of temple building and restoration that marked Elamite royal patronage practices in the Early and Middle Elamite era. We can only speculate whether this was because temples were never prominent in Pārsa in the Middle or Neo-Elamite periods, or if this change arose from a cultural shift.³⁷ The fact that we have no evidence of pre-Achaemenid Elamite temples in the core of Pārsa compared to the lowlands would suggest that this was the normal state of affairs in the highlands before the rise of the Persian empire.

While not involving fire or image temples, the available archaeological and archival evidence of Persian religious activity and patronage does present a coherent picture of Persian sacred architecture and ritual in their homeland of Pārsa and a few of their provincial

³³ The Aramaic version, which is very close to the Akkadian version and reflects later changes and refinements to Darius I’s message, also calls them “houses of the gods” (Schmitt 1990).

³⁴ Schmitt 1990; Seidl 1999.

³⁵ Tuplin 2005, pp. 227–35.

³⁶ There are a handful of mentions of *ziyan* in the Persepolis archive; see below. It is possible that the mentions of sanctuaries (*hiera*) in Elymais and Media

in the post-Achaemenid classical sources were ancient temples (*ziyan*) that survived from the Achaemenid era. However, without further evidence it is equally likely the temples were built in the Seleukid era or were simply open-air sanctuaries.

³⁷ I would hesitate from trying to connect it to an inter-Iranian religious conflict with one side supporting Elamite religions and the other promoting Iranian or Zoroastrian cult; DB 1.63–4.

centers. The Persepolis Fortification Archive tablets allude to a rich repertoire of Persian rituals performed at sites within Pārsa. These include daily offerings, huge sacrifices, and funerary cults. In a few instances the tablets provide clues as to the topographical context of the rituals. The most commonly occurring ritual is the *lan*, or “offering” ritual, which was performed with bread, beer or wine, and occasionally sheep or goats.³⁸ The *lan* was a common sacrifice that individual cultic personnel supported by the state performed monthly or even daily for a diverse assortment of Elamo-Persian gods.³⁹ The offering (*daušiyam* or *gal*) allocated for these sacrifices served as allowances for the priests performing it. Although some erroneously argued that the *lan* was a “Zoroastrian state ritual” celebrated for Auramazdā, the Persians performed the *lan* for a wide variety of gods, the vast majority of whom were non-Iranian.⁴⁰ Furthermore, unlike other rituals, the *lan* is not mentioned in the Old Persian royal inscriptions when the king sacrifices to Auramazdā, which one would expect if it were the chief state ritual.⁴¹

In addition to the *lan*, the Persepolis Fortification Archive records provisions given for sacrifices offered for the benefit of deceased kings at an offering table (*bašur*) at their tomb monument (*šumar*).⁴² Like the *lan*, the *šumar/bašur* sacrifices occurred daily and the commodities offered also functioned as rations for the responsible ritual specialists. Like the *lan*, grain or bread along with beer or wine formed the core of the commodities offered at the funerary monuments. The *šumar/bašur* officiants also received livestock to sacrifice for the benefit of the kings and, of course, consume afterwards.⁴³

The sacrifices at the royal tomb monuments took place in the open air. The main feature of these precincts was the tomb monument itself (*šumar*), offering tables (*bašur*), and associated support buildings. These monuments could either be freestanding ashlar masonry tombs such as that of Cyrus the Great, or rock-cut tombs of the sort favored by Darius I and his successors (figs. 14.2–3). Textual and archaeological evidence indicates that the tomb monuments had buildings for the tomb guardians and officiants, however, these were staging and storage areas. We have no evidence that the tomb monument or tables were connected with some sort of enclosed *naos*-like space that functioned as a “house for a god” as was the case for cult rendered for the Seleukid kings. The Chicago expedition never excavated the areas before the tombs cut into the Kuh-e Raḥmat. However, between 1955 and 1957 the Archaeological Institute of Persepolis under the direction of ‘Alī Sāmī did explore this area.⁴⁴ In front of the tomb attributed to Artaxerxes II the excavators discovered a 20-meter-square platform that supported a hall with two columns in the center with narrow rooms on two sides and porch in the front. A similar platform 32 meters long preceded the tomb attributed to Artaxerxes III (fig. 14.4). This supported a complex of sun-dried brick buildings with stone column bases and thresholds, which unfortunately the author does not describe in further

³⁸ Henkelman 2011, p. 93; cf. Abdi 2006–2007.

³⁹ Henkelman 2008, pp. 281–304.

⁴⁰ It should also be noted that the Persepolis Fortification Archive regularly records priests called “magi” (*makuš*) sacrificing to non-Iranian gods and priests with an Elamite title (*šatin*) sacrificing to Iranian gods (Henkelman 2008, pp. 215–53).

⁴¹ Henkelman 2011, pp. 96–98; 2008, pp. 206–07, 232–36. Contra Razmjou (2004, 2010), who speculated that rituals took place in the *tačara* of Darius I, no textual

or archaeological evidence exists that ritual activity took place there. The *tačara* reliefs portray the provisions of the royal table, a constant preoccupation in the Persepolis archive (Henkelman 2010).

⁴² The texts can use these words interchangeably (Henkelman 2003; 2008, pp. 287–91; Canepa 2010a).

⁴³ Arrian, *Anabasis* 29.1–11; Henkelman 2003, pp. 137–40; Canepa 2010a.

⁴⁴ Sāmī 1958, pp. 58–60.

detail. The excavations discovered broken sections of the door's tomb: a double-leaved door with a sliding latch on the inner side turned by a key, opening inward.⁴⁵ Also recovered in this area was a stone slab 1.03 meters square, which had a raised smaller square surrounded on all sides by a recessed channel with an opening to drain anything poured onto the raised section. The excavator related it to two stone troughs discovered nearby and it is tempting to see this as a *bašur*. A bronze trumpet 1.20 meters long with a 60 centimeter diameter bell was discovered near this tomb and could have been a part of the cultic paraphernalia.⁴⁶

Fragmentary relief sculptures found at the satrapal capital of Daskyleion in Western Anatolia could relate to this institution. One relief portrays male figures in profile wearing long tunics drawn together with belts, robes over their shoulders and each with a *kyrbasia* on his head, drawn over the mouth (fig. 14.5).⁴⁷ The figures hold *barsoms* in their left hands and raise their right hands while intently looking at a structure before them crowned with Achaemenid-style *kyma raversa* that rises to eye level. This example portrays sacrificial activity that roughly corresponds to the Persepolis Fortification Archive and other evidence of Mazdaean sacrifice, with the heads of a sacrificed ram and bull lying at the officiants' feet on bundles of grass or twigs, which themselves rest on a platform or table attached to the structure before them. The other example portrays a structure with prominent coffers or a coffered door crowned by moldings that recall molding on the Tomb of Cyrus (fig. 14.6). This structure should be eye level to the figure in profile as the other one, however, it was imaginatively and incorrectly restored as a tower. The officiant holds a *barsom* in his right hand and staff in his left. Recalling Strabo, who mentions that the magi point to the focus of their sacrifice with a staff, the figure carefully places his staff at the bottom edge of the structure (Strabo, *Geographia* 15.3.14). We do not know what the roofs of the structures looked like because the top portions of the reliefs are missing, cutting them off. Some of the closest parallels come from Achaemenid tombs stemming from the Persian presence in Anatolia, such as Taş Kule, though the heartland tombs such as Pasargadae or Bozpař provide parallels.⁴⁸

Though performed less frequently, the Persepolis Fortification Archive indicates that the Achaemenids' most important, prestigious, not to mention expensive, religious rituals were large-scale royal sacrifices followed by massive feasts. These include the *šip* sacrifice and the *bakadausiyam* (Old Persian **bagadauciyam*), if indeed these are not references to one and the same type of ritual.⁴⁹ Like the *lan*, the Persians performed these rituals for a variety of gods beyond Auramazdā, who plays a relatively minor role compared to Elamite gods. Auramazdā was not the only god to receive such an elaborate sacrifice in the records of the Persepolis archive, yet it is significant that the *šip* is the only type of ritual that Achaemenid royal inscriptions mention when a king specifically names the type of sacrifice he performed for Auramazdā. The religious terminology used in the Elamite translations of the royal inscriptions coheres with the Elamite ritual terminology used in the Persepolis archive. While the Old Persian versions of Achaemenid royal inscriptions simply say that kings of kings generically "sacrificed" (*yad-*) to Auramazdā, the Elamite translations often provide more nuance. For example, in the Old Persian version of Darius I's famous inscription from Susa (DSf), the king simply states he sacrificed to Auramazdā (*yad-*).⁵⁰ The Elamite version of this inscription provides an equally

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 59–60.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 60.

⁴⁷ Borchhardt 1968, pp. 201–03.

⁴⁸ Cahill 1988; Vanden Berghe 1989; Canepa 2010a.

⁴⁹ The Persepolis archive records five locations that accommodated *šip* feasts: Tikranuš, Appištapdan (twice), Batrakataš/Pasargadae (three times), Išgi, and Pumu (Henkelman 2011, p. 109).

⁵⁰ DSfp 18.

generic wording. Darius I states, “I gave ‘offerings’ [gal] to Auramazdā,” without specifying the type of ritual(s) in which offerings were consumed.⁵¹ In contrast, in an inscription preserved in many copies, Xerxes I boasts that he destroyed a *daivadāna* (“place [for the worship] of the demons”), purified the site, and sacrificed there to Auramazdā.⁵² While the Old Persian version again simply uses the generic verb “to sacrifice” (yad-), the Elamite version specifies the type of ritual used to worship both the *daivas* and Auramazdā: it calls them a *šip*, the grand feast celebrated for many people, which seamlessly connects to other mentions of this supreme example of Elamo-Persian religiosity as witnessed in the Persepolis archive. It claims that at the *daivadāna* a *šip* feast was performed for the *daivas* and after purifying it, Xerxes I “performed for Auramazdā his [appropriate] *šip*” (Elamite *šibbe hudda*).⁵³

While they offer detailed accounts of the commodities needed to perform them, the Persepolis Fortification Tablets do not contain direct descriptions of the ritual protocol of these sacrifices. They do, however, often record the names of the sites where the rituals were staged and some of the features of those sites. Internal evidence in the Persepolis Fortification Archive, related archaeological sites, and classical sources that reflect these institutions flesh out these crucial yet terse indigenous records and all place them in open-air settings.⁵⁴ This combined evidentiary stream presents the *šip*, and likely the *bakadaušiyam*, as an elaborate open-air sacrificial feast presented for a large assembly of people arranged in concentric rings with the most important individuals at the center with altars standing at the center of the assembled crowd. Out of the hundreds of archival records extant, not a single tablet mentions that the *lan*, *šip*, *bakadaušiyam*, or *šumar/bašur* sacrifices ever took place at, in, or near a temple (*ziyan*).

While temples did not play a big part in their official architectonic vocabulary, the Persians did indeed develop a repertoire of sacred spaces that imprinted the natural and built environment with Persian imperial power. Achaemenid open-air sanctuaries form the most well-documented archaeological and textual evidence of unquestionably Persian sacred spaces. They consist of open-air spaces surrounded by some sort of precinct barrier and subsidiary buildings and often incorporate altars or some other special structure, such as a tomb monument or a tower, as an important focus.

The sites that host the *šip* and *bakadaušiyam* sacrifices most often in the Persepolis tablets, such as Tikranuš, Appištapdan, and Batrakataš (Pasargadae), were sites provisioned with either a palace, paradise (Elamite *parētaš*, Old Iranian *pairi.daiza*), or both.⁵⁵ The presence of paradises or royal palaces underscores the supremely royal nature of both the sites and the sacrifice no matter if it was officiated by the king of kings himself or one of his proxies, such as the chief official overseeing Pārsa, Pharnakes (Parnakka). Of the *šip* sites recorded in the Persepolis Fortification Archive, Pasargadae is the only one that has been localized and excavated. First explored by Herzfeld in the early twentieth century, and excavated by David Stronach between 1961 and 1963, Pasargadae preserves a large enclosure that accommodated

⁵¹ DSfe 16–17. Similarly DSze 15, though it is missing the corresponding Old Persian passage.

⁵² XPh 37–38. Whether such a *daivadāna* ever existed is irrelevant to these discussions, though it would be severe anachronism to try read late antique/medieval “Zoroastrian” purity strictures into the texts (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1989; Abdi 2010).

⁵³ XPh 30, 32, 33, 34, 41, 44 corresponding to Old Persian *yad-*. The Akkadian version is closer to the Elamite describing the activity as a “religious festival” (*isinnu*) (Henkelman 2008, pp. 102–04).

⁵⁴ Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.3.33–34; Appian, *Mithradates* 12.66; Diodorus, *Bibliothēkē* 19.22.2–3; Arrian, *Anabasis* 6.29.4–7; Strabo, *Geographia* 15.3.7.

⁵⁵ Henkelman 2008, pp. 427–52.

these activities and incorporated ritual furniture stemming from Iranian religious sensibilities not directly mentioned in the Elamite texts. The sacred precinct at Pasargadae consisted of a large open plain surrounded by low mud walls (fig. 14.7) and two, 2-meter limestone plinths set 9 meters apart and both supported by foundations.⁵⁶ One of these plinths had stairs leading up to it and together they evoke the image of the Achaemenid king standing on a platform worshipping a raised altar carrying a blazing fire. At the western end of the precinct rose a terrace measuring 74.85 × 50.40–46.65 meters, whose five levels were constructed out of dry-stone masonry with a mudbrick level on top.⁵⁷ Herzfeld, and many following him, wished to reconstruct the terrace as supporting a stone structure mirroring the Tomb of Cyrus thus providing an architectural reflection of the tomb on the opposite end of the complex. The mudbrick upper terrace, however, bore no evidence of foundations of such a structure, either of stone or mudbrick. Needless to say, the design of the terrace does not resemble the stereobate of the tomb. The size of the mudbricks from the upper terrace indicate only that it could have been built any time within the Achaemenid or Seleukid period, though more likely in the Seleukid era. No matter when it was constructed, the design of the terrace related to the layout and, thus, activities, of the enclosed precinct below, providing either a raised focal point or elevated viewing area for proceedings.

A number of other Achaemenid sites have been described as open-air ritual centers, though no archaeological, archival, or textual evidence directly documents the type of ritual practices performed there in the Achaemenid era. It is likely that the Median site of Bīsotūn (Old Persian *Bagastāna) was already sacred in the Achaemenid era and this contributed to Darius I's desire to carve his monumental rock relief there (fig. 14.8). The Achaemenid court physician Ctesias describes the mountain as "sacred to Zeus," and the site of a *paradeisos*.⁵⁸ The sanctuary precinct walls are still visible from aerial imagery and ran from one cliff spur to another, enclosing an area approximately 180 meters.⁵⁹ Within the precinct a sloping hillside leads up to a rubble field, which, in turn, abuts the cliffs. Two artificial terraces mark the hillside with evidence of cult activity on the southern ledge of the upper terrace. A rock-cut stair leads from the rubble field to a third zone that looked down upon Darius I's rock relief and preserves evidence of cult activity. The only evidence of cult are the natural, open-air cliff-side terraces, which have "fire bowls" or foundation holes carved into them, though these could just as well date from a later period.⁶⁰ The site of Ganj-nāma, also in Media, was a site of two rock-cut royal inscriptions carved by Darius I and Xerxes.⁶¹ The inscriptions marked the site of a waterfall on a mountain pass and rock-cut holes in the natural open-air terrace above the site have been associated with ritual activity.⁶²

The only sacred structure securely attached to an official Achaemenid context for which we have direct archaeological evidence of sacrifice is the site of Dahan-e Čolāmān, a pre-planned Achaemenid city in Zranka (Hāmūn-e Helmand, eastern Iran), likely the provincial capital.⁶³ A large square structure (QN3), which measured 53.2 × 54.3 meters, contained a

⁵⁶ Stronach 1978, p. 138. Subsequent excavations on the Toll-e Tākt has proven the elevated site was a treasury and fortress, not a sacred precinct (Chaverdi and Callieri 2010).

⁵⁷ Stronach 1978, pp. 142–45.

⁵⁸ Ctesias in Diodorus, *Bibliothēkē* 2.13.1–2. Reflecting the Iranian name, Diodorus (17.110.5) calls the site *theoprepestatē* "fitting for the gods" (Schmitt 1990).

Bernard (1980, p. 322) links the site with the toponym "Kampanda" (DB 2.27).

⁵⁹ Kleiss 1970; Bernard 1980, p. 319.

⁶⁰ Luschey 1989.

⁶¹ Brown 2000.

⁶² Schippmann 1971, pp. 380–88.

⁶³ Scerrato 1979.

square central courtyard containing three altars surrounded by four non-communicating porticos (fig. 14.9). The porticos hosted ovens and large-scale cooking facilities that could accommodate the type of feasts associated with Persian (though not necessarily Zoroastrian) religion as described in the fortification tablets. The north, east, and west porticos sheltered a number of clay ovens for baking bread. In the structure's second phase, the west portico contained large tanks used as large cooking pits, which were covered with greasy ashes mixed with crushed animal bones. The three central altars originally stood 7 meters high and were likely added in the second phase. In contrast to the Achaemenid fire holders found at Pasargadae, or the ones portrayed on the royal tombs, these altars were hollow and contained the fire inside them in a manner not dissimilar from the smaller installations under the porticos. The ritual activity generated a great deal of cooking detritus. The courtyard contained large quantities of ash mixed with burnt animal flesh and bones. This was plastered over in the refurbishment and accumulated again in later cultic activity. As the excavator stressed, these cultic installations used the same basic design as domestic kitchens in the city. As various authors have mentioned time and time again, the cultic activity that the site hosted contrasts with "orthodox" Zoroastrianism, which would not admit to the flames of a sacred fire anything but incense and a small portion of fat.⁶⁴ This structure hosted something quite different from an "orthodox" Zoroastrian cult of fire and this has often been cited to stress that the cult it hosted was non-Persian. Although it has traditionally been interpreted as a "non-Persian" cult site, it should be stressed that the sanctuary of Dahan-e Ġolāmān presents nothing that disagrees with the view of Persian religiousity provided in our most abundant and indigenous evidence, the Persepolis Fortification Tablets, which do not cohere with Boyce's definition of orthodox Zoroastrianism either. The fact that the majority of the religious rituals mentioned in the Persepolis archive involved sacrifices of, and subsequent feasting on, bread, animals, and alcoholic beverages, suggests that the activities that took place in the structure would not have been foreign to *Persian* religiousity. It would not be surprising if such ritual provisions were to be discovered among the ruins at another major Achaemenid site.⁶⁵

The satrapies of Anatolia were among the most important of the empire and here too the Achaemenid religious building centered on open-air cult sites. Satrapal seats received a sizable influx of Iranian settlers as well as official patronage of both Iranian and local gods. The introduction of the cult of Iranian gods, especially that of Anāhitā and to a lesser extent Mithra, made a deep impact on the religions of Anatolia. As the imperial center, Anatolia has not yielded any Achaemenid-era archaeological evidence of specifically Persian fire or image temples, though the Achaemenids contributed to temples of local gods.⁶⁶ Those constructions that the Persians built involve open-air sanctuaries and altars. The Persians were likely involved in the construction of a monumental altar with Persian stepped features built in a sanctuary of Artemis.⁶⁷ An altar dedicated to Cybele was rebuilt and converted to a different cultic use in the Achamenid era.⁶⁸ In addition to these sites that bear archaeological

⁶⁴ Boyce 1982, pp. 128–29; Genito 2010; de Jong 2002 shows that animal sacrifice is standard in the Avesta.

⁶⁵ Evoking, but not replicating, the ground plan of QN3 and not sharing its function, Soviet excavations of the late fifth-century B.C.E. site of Altin-10 near Balkh uncovered a square structure (36 × 36 m) with a central courtyard that the excavator termed a "pal-

ace." Sarianidi claimed to have found a "fire altar" made of unbaked bricks and plaster in one of the corner rooms, though nothing corresponding to the character of QN3 (Houtkamp 1991, p. 34).

⁶⁶ Dusinberre 2003, pp. 68–69.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 60–64.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 64–68.

evidence, classical textual sources describe a few other Achaemenid open-air sanctuaries located on elevated locales. Among these, Strabo relates that the Persians created a sanctuary at Zela, the site of a surprise victory over a band of Scythians. According to the author, the Persians raised a mound of earth over a rock in the plain, fortified it, and created a sanctuary to the gods “Anaitis, Omanus, and Anadatus” (his rendition of the Persians’ chief gods) who share an altar (*Geographia* 11.8.4). The cult of Zeus Asbameios, reportedly of Persian origin, was connected with the city of Tyana and centered around a sacred volcanic spring in the mountains.⁶⁹

In addition to sites securely attached to official patronage, or at least a Persian context, a few sites in Central Asia dating to the Achaemenid era, though not securely attached to Achaemenid patronage or Persian occupation, show evidence of cult activity and some even contained evidence of fire cult reminiscent of late antique Zoroastrianism. Most of these were excavated by the Soviets, then re-excavated after 1990. Köktepe in the Kashka Darya plain, near Shahr-e Sabz, Uzbekistan, showed evidence of a masonry platform built on the site of a courtyard from a previous period.⁷⁰ The excavators associated this platform with the incorporation of the region into the Achaemenid empire. The largely unpublished Uzbek and French re-excavation of Sangyrtepa has brought attention to a rectangular space, which may or may not have been enclosed, that appears to have hosted some sort of cult activity.⁷¹ Sangyrtepa was a square mudbrick structure with evidence of four wooden posts set in the main room, which showed evidence of burning at a later stage. Some sort of portico likely fronted the structure and several steps led up to at least one side. Sangyrtepa showed evidence of libation pits, which might hint at continuities of ritual practice with later evidence at Ai Khanum, even if the architecture of the two sites does not directly relate.⁷² It was not built on a platform but on level earth which had several pits filled with sand, pebbles, ash, or bones, which the excavators compared to Vedic purification rituals. In the past, scholars have been tempted to connect these sites linearly to the earlier (non-Iranian) BMAC sites and thence to Boyce’s imagined Zoroastrian temple tradition. However, the wide divergence in design, materials, and cultic activity among them indicates that we are looking at diverse and unconnected architectural and religious traditions.

The fortress site of Cheshme Shafa (Češmeh-ye Šafā), located near Bactra (Balkh), yielded a massive piece of roughly hewn limestone that measured ca. 2.10 meters high and 2.70 × 1.55 across on its top. It was obviously of local manufacture and craftsmanship, having been rolled down from a quarry up above the site. The rectangular dimensions and conical shape of the monolith’s shaft do not closely correspond to known Achaemenid altars, although a hole on the top and evidence of burning on the lower section where it had not been exposed to the elements in later periods suggested to the excavators that it was an altar. Despite this, it is possible the stone was worked to present a rough profile, albeit two-stepped, that evoked but did not replicate the three-stepped Achaemenid altars known from Pasargadae and portrayed on the Achaemenid tombs. If it did function as an altar, as the evidence of burning on its lower section suggests, such discrepancies might have arisen because this royally charged

⁶⁹ Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 1.6; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 23.6.19; Mitchell 2007, pp. 167–69.

⁷⁰ Rapin 2007, pp. 39–44.

⁷¹ Archéologies d’Orient et d’Occident et textes anciens (AOROC), “Sangyr-tepe (Kashka-darya),”

<http://www.archeo.ens.fr/spip.php?article505> [accessed Sept. 10, 2011].

⁷² Discussed below; Grenet 1991; idem 2008 [2012], p. 30.

sculpture from the imperial center was likely transmitted to Bactria primarily through seal images. Some have speculated it might have been housed in some sort of structure, but the site's disturbed stratigraphy presents no clear evidence to support this or what went on around the object.⁷³

The mound of Kindyktepa near the larger complex of Majdatepa (also called Bandyxon/Bandykhan I) presents compelling evidence of cultic activity. Previously explored by E. Rtveladze in the 1970s and more recently by a German-Uzbek expedition, the site is located in southern Uzbekistan on the right bank of the Urgul-Saj River, which eventually connects to the Surkhandarya valley. It yielded a small mud structure dated to the fourth century B.C.E. built on a platform with an irregular ground plan roughly 14.0 × 8.5 meters. Four irregularly placed mudbrick pillars were placed near the middle of the room, where the floor appears to have been repeatedly exposed to fire and deposits of pure ashes were found in the northern and eastern corners. A roughly 12 × 2 meter chamber lay to the northeast of the main chamber which contained pits filled with sand, mud, and ashes. The structure went out of use at the time of Alexander's conquest and was filled up with packed dirt.⁷⁴

The architectural and cultic remains from Cheshme Shafa, Sangyrtepa, and Kindyktepa in no way present evidence of a unified architectural tradition and certainly not evidence of Zoroastrian temples inserted into the region by Persian official architecture. Rather, they resulted from the combination of regional cultic and architectural traditions with isolated and mediated influence from the imperial center. While Sangyrtepa's portico might evoke some Persian architecture, only the massive fire altar from Cheshme Shafa can be securely said to derive from official Persian forms. The altar itself, of course, does not indicate Zoroastrian practice. The altar retained evidence of burning, but no ash was excavated from it or around it. However, the abundant Persepolis Fortification Archive seal images indicate that if the altar hosted cult that conformed to Persian official cult, it certainly would not have conformed to Zoroastrian strictures. To judge by the Persepolis Fortification Archive sealings, the altar would have burned sacrificial animals and libations rather than holding a pure fire. The structures, on the other hand, reflect regional cultic traditions rather than the emplacement of an official, empire-wide Achaemenid system (see below). The evidence of pure ashes and the basic layout of the cultic space in the small structure at Kindyktepa does indeed correspond to other known cultic spaces. Significantly, clear comparanda do not come from Achaemenid Persia, Media, or Mesopotamia, but rather sites in the eastern Iranian world that have yielded the first clear and securely dated evidence of a structure hosting a fire cult. Kindyktepa's basic conformation of a main cultic space, including a main room, a single side chamber, and evidence of pure ash, corresponds to the size and layout of cultic spaces that hosted fire cults at the site of Tash-k'irman Tepe in Uzbekistan (ancient Chorasmia), and the site of Mele Hairam in Turkmenistan (ancient Parthia). Tash-k'irman Tepe is dated to the fourth century B.C.E. by radiocarbon analysis while Mele Hairam dates to the second century C.E. They represent the earliest securely dated temples that unquestionably held fire cult.⁷⁵ Sangyrtepa did not preserve clear evidence of cultic activity involving a pure fire, though it shows some evidence of burning. This might relate to the clearer evidence

⁷³ Bensental and Marquis 2008 [2010], pp. 987–88, fig. 9; Grenet 2008 [2012], pp. 30–31.

⁷⁴ Sverchkov and Boroffka 2009, p. 87; Boroffka and Sverchkov 2007.

⁷⁵ Betts and Yagodin 2007; Kaim 2004.

at Kindyktepe and Tash-k'irman Tepe, though the question should remain open, given Sanguyrtepa's state of preservation and disturbed stratigraphy.

Thus, rather than representing the impact of official Persian fire-temple architecture, the evidence suggests that Kindyktepa and Tash-k'irman Tepe participated in an eastern Iranian cultic tradition that continued to develop through the period of Achaemenid domination and, as evidenced by Mele Hairam, into the Seleukid and Parthian periods. Only in the late Sasanian era do we have archaeological evidence of similar cultic spaces in the western Iranian world. Though intriguing, these temples' relationship to later Sasanian practices is, at this point, unclear, and should remain open until new evidence comes to light that can clarify whether and in what way these developments are linked.

The corpus of ritual scenes from the Persepolis Fortification seal impressions provides another important body of primary evidence. These have been made accessible through the pioneering work of Mark Garrison.⁷⁶ The seal imprints largely cohere with the indigenous archival and textual evidence: they do not portray fire or image temples conforming to Elamite, Mesopotamian, or late antique Zoroastrianism, but rather depict open-air sacrifice focused on various types of altars. The glyptic evidence portrays two general groups of scenes: rituals performed by figures in crowns and royal Persian robes, and rituals conducted by individuals in normal Iranian trouser suits (figs. 14.10–11). The rarer, more elaborate representations of royal individuals portray them standing before a coffered structure with two crenellations ending in finials. PFS 11* (see fig. 14.10) and PTS 22 are the only scenes where the crenelated tower structure has a spherical device in the central space. In three other examples a vegetal motif rises from the center, but never fire.⁷⁷ Those that portray scenes of non-royal officiants show individuals in procession to or standing before a blazing altar. Rather than holding a fire for veneration, these altars were clearly meant for immolating sacrificial offerings. In eleven particularly fine seals the fire altar appears before a taller, coffered structure or "tower" (e.g., fig. 14.11). About half of these seals pairing the blazing altars and towers portray the towers with crenellations, while the other half show two triangular masses that form a V-shape. There is no distinction in scene type between the crenellated and V-shaped tower types, but no fire on top. A fire always appears on the stepped altars, but a fire never appears on the taller coffered "towers." The officiants often carry libation vessels, pour offerings into the fire, drink ritual offerings themselves, and lead sacrificial animals to the altar. Although it runs counter to older assumptions that the Achaemenids followed the same sort of Zoroastrian prohibitions as medieval Zoroastrians, such seals portray the officiants killing the animals with knives and some even feature a fire consuming an entire animal.⁷⁸

Fire altars play a prominent role in many of the Persian seals and seal impressions.⁷⁹ A number of seal impressions portray images of male figures standing to the left facing a fire

⁷⁶ Garrison 2000 and forthcoming. I thank Mark Garrison for sharing with me ideas from his forthcoming book. Any misrepresentation here is my responsibility. While Prof. Garrison is cautious about referring to the stepped structures as "altars," so as not to confuse them with contemporary Parsi Zoroastrian altars, I do so here in the sense that these altars appear to have functioned as altars commonly did in the ancient world: they burned sacrificial offerings.

⁷⁷ Garrison forthcoming.

⁷⁸ Garrison forthcoming; seal PFUTS 33 on anepigraphic tablet PFUT 845-101; seal PFS 75 on anepigraphic tablet PFUT 2146-104; seal PFUTS 91 on anepigraphic tablet PFUT 691-103; seal PFUTS 111 on anepigraphic tablet PFUT 698-102; seal PFUTS 147 on anepigraphic tablet PFUT 547-201. Moorey 1979, p. 222, fig. 3B; Henkelman 2005, 2008, pp. 424–25.

⁷⁹ Garrison forthcoming.

altar with an upward-tapering “stepped” bowl that holds a fire altar. The stepped altar appears at the end of a procession or receives the sacrifices of a single individual. Fire, signified by shapes such as inverted cones or semi-circles marked with vertical lines or a small, interior cone, blazes forth from the top of these altars. The fire altars portrayed on the sealings are similar to fragments of altars found at various sites in Pārsa, including, most significantly, Pasargadae.⁸⁰ The stereotyped image of the king of kings standing on a plinth before a blazing stepped altar on the rock-cut royal tombs underscores centrality of fire altars in official Achaemenid ritual practice and religious visual vocabulary. Representatives of all of the lands effortlessly and willingly support the throne that supports the king of kings. Taken together with the archival, archaeological, and textual evidence, it is very likely that Darius I and his successors understood this iconic scene not simply as a symbolic representation but as a composite portrayal of the king’s place as the central officiant in a major sacrificial feast such as the *śip* or *bakadaušiyam*. It is not inconsequential that later classical sources which mention the *śip* or mention sacrifices intended to evoke the *śip*, specify that a fire or fire altars lay at the center of the ritual assembly. This implies that the image of the Persian king before a fire altar portrays the central climactic event of the *śip*, rather than a separate “pure” Iranian fire cult.

While altars holding blazing fires were very important, the Achaemenid seals attest to a wider repertoire of Achaemenid sacred architecture and ritual furnishing associated particularly with the court. When the crenellated tower appears alone, it does so strictly in scenes replete with royal iconography such as date palms, paneled inscriptions, winged symbols, and attended by figures in royal dress (e.g., fig. 14.10).⁸¹ The figures that stand before the towers always treat them with reverence. The figures in Persian courtly robes raise their right forearms and assume a pose that is similar to the kings on the royal tombs, often holding a flower similar to those held by Achaemenid kings elsewhere in Persepolis sculpture. The “stepped fire altars” and “towers” appear by themselves, however, they accompany each other where the figures perform ritual actions at a stepped altar that stands next to the tower. The Persian glyptic evidence does not show the officiants placing or pouring any of their offerings between the towers’ crenellations. If shown, such activity takes place at a fire altar in front of the tower. This might indicate that the tower altars functioned simply as a focus for the ritual or a sacred object in and of themselves. While these seal images immediately bring to mind a range of representations of offering tables or altars from across ancient Western Asia and the eastern Mediterranean, horned crenellation along the southeast edge of the Persepolis platform provide some of the closest parallels both in terms of design and chronology.⁸² As Margaret Cool Root pointed out, Persian palaces were treated, in effect, as sacred spaces and it is not outside the realm of possibility that such daily or festive offerings took place within the palace precincts in addition to those we know that took place in their proximity.⁸³

⁸⁰ Stronach 1978, pp. 141–42; Garrison 1999.

⁸¹ Garrison forthcoming.

⁸² Galling 1925; Tilia 1977, p. 77. Though separated by about four centuries, a variety of Nabataean rock-cut tombs bear features, like towers with double crenellations, that evoke, but do not replicate, these Achaemenid images. Certain Nabataean temples also

evoke the post-Seleukid temples (Anderson 2002). While older strains of scholarship saw these as directly participating in a co-temporal architectural tradition, it would be the work of a future study to explore the actual relationship among these various Persian, Middle Iranian, and Levantine forms.

⁸³ Root 2010. I would agree with this aspect of Razmjou 2010.

The appearance of “towers” or “tower altars” on the seals brings to mind two Achaemenid towers in Pārsa: the Zendān-e Solaymān and the Ka‘ba-ye Zardošt (figs. 14.12–13). The Achaemenid towers contrast with the seal images with regards to their size relative to human scale and exterior features like stereobates and stairs leading to doorways. Neither tower bears evidence that they bore such crenellations in antiquity, marking a clear contrast with the structures portrayed on the seals. The images on the seals certainly are not meant to be portraits of the Zendān or Ka‘ba, however, they did participate generally in the same wider architectural vocabulary of Persian royal and sacred power. The two towers were unique, set within the Persian heartland, and their patrons built them at two sites they intended to be deeply significant for the genesis and continuity of Persian kingship: Cyrus the Great’s palace complex at Pasargadae and the Achaemenid necropolis begun by Darius I at Naqš-e Rostam near Persepolis.

Darius I constructed the Ka‘ba-ye Zardošt in careful imitation of the Zendān-e Solaymān, though using more advanced masonry techniques, which have contributed to its superior state of preservation.⁸⁴ The ashlar masonry towers, whose faces measured 12.60 meters high × 7.25 meters wide, rest on a triple-stone plinth. They give the impression of having three stories, but the lower half of the tower is solid, while the upper half accommodates a single chamber measuring, in the case of the Ka‘ba, 3.74 × 3.72 meters in area and 5.58 meters high.⁸⁵ An imposing flight of steps on the north of the structures leads to the elevated chamber. The lintel over the entrance with swooping “horns” perhaps recalls the crenellations on the seals as well as the wider visual vocabulary of sacred structures in Elamite culture. The doorways of the structures contained insets for double-leaved stone doors similar to those on the Achaemenid rock-cut tombs. As suggested by the door fragment found at Pasargadae and the missing sill and door jambs of the Ka‘ba, once these doors were closed locked in place, they likely would have been broken open or had elements of the doorframe removed to gain access.⁸⁶

Neither the Zendān nor Ka‘ba stood alone. Both structures lay at the core of an ensemble of buildings, suggesting that they formed the focal point of a larger architectonic and ritual complex. Schmidt’s test trenches revealed a dense concentration of buildings around the Ka‘ba-ye Zardošt, which he dated variously to the Achaemenid, Hellenistic, and Sasanian eras.⁸⁷ Geomagnetic prospecting at Pasargadae indicates that the Zendān was the centerpiece of a larger complex.⁸⁸ A 45 meter wide stone structure that appears to contain a series of parallel rectangular chambers similar to Persian treasuries, archives, or internal storage areas of the Persepolis fortifications was oriented on the same axis as the tower and rose about 30 meters from the rear of the Zendān. To the southeast, a rectangular enclosure with subsidiary structures flanked the Zendān and the stone structure. Excavations in the vicinity of Naqš-e Rostam have revealed an early royal pavilion constructed about 500 meters from the Ka‘ba-ye Zardošt, recalling Pasargadae.⁸⁹ This could indicate that the towers at Naqš-e Rostam and Pasargadae hosted activities that the king of kings could participate in or

⁸⁴ Nylander (1966) concluded that the Zendān was constructed before the Ka‘ba, since the Ka‘ba made use of iron clamps to join its blocks and the Zendān did not. The Zendān was likely built during the same period as the palaces of Pasargadae (ca. 540 B.C.E.), and the Ka‘ba, during the reign of Darius I, sometime after 520 B.C.E. (Gropp 2004).

⁸⁵ Stronach 1967, pp. 287–88; Schmidt 1970, pp. 34–49.

⁸⁶ Stronach 1978, pp. 125–27, figs. 64, 131, and pl. 101a–b.

⁸⁷ Stronach 1967; Schmidt 1970, pp. 53–58, fig. 23.

⁸⁸ Boucharlat and Benech 2002; Boucharlat 2003, 2007; Benech, Boucharlat, and Gondet 2012.

⁸⁹ Tilia 1974.

publicly view, either from a distance or in short procession from these palaces or pavilions. The Ka‘ba stood among dense complex of structures and rituals at Naqš-e Rostam relating to the site’s rock-cut tombs. From excavations of the platforms in front of the rock-cut tombs behind Persepolis and the evidence in the Persepolis Fortification Archive, we can safely infer that structures meant to accommodate the tombs’ guardians lay before each of the tombs at Naqš-e Rostam. This complex would have grown denser as each new tomb monument appeared along with its associated subsidiary structures.

Although theories abound, the exact functions of the Ka‘ba-ye Zardošt and Zendān-e Solaymān remain unknown. While a number of scholars from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries assumed they were fire temples, a consensus has held for several decades that the towers’ patrons did not build them to contain an ever-burning fire.⁹⁰ Considering the fact that the stone doors did not allow easy access, it seems logical that the towers’ primary function was to contain or protect something admitting access to their interior chambers only seldomly. No matter what function scholars ascribe to them, most generally accept that they shared a similar purpose. If this is true, Darius I likely built the Ka‘ba to allow Naqš-e Rostam to accommodate the same activities that the Zendān hosted at Pasargadae. If one accepts that the towers on the seals relate in some way to the Zendān and Ka‘ba, the seals might provide evidence that broadly relates to Persian ritual practice involving such structures.⁹¹ The sealings in the Persepolis Fortification corpus invariably portray the towers closed if indeed their artisans intended to represent them with doors at all. It seems that manifesting their contents, if there were any, was not important. In the seal images, individuals or groups process to the towers, stand or are seated in front of them. There they make offerings at a fire altar located in close proximity to the structures. The figures appear directly before the towers or at a stepped fire altar, and there raise their hands in reverence, pour or consume libations, or present or even kill a sacrificial animal. When the participants perform a ritual action they always do so before the tower, never inside or on top. While an officiant might have entered the Zendān and Ka‘ba for other purposes, the seals suggest that their exterior facades were the main focal point of routine ritual activity, rather than their interior chambers.

It is indeed tempting to view the Zendān as belonging in some way to the “sanctuary” (*heiron*) that Plutarch’s *Life of Artaxerxes* places at Pasargadae, though not necessarily functioning as a “temple” or *the hieron*.

A little after Darius had died, [Artaxerxes] set out for Pasargadae so that the royal initiation might be completed by the Persian priests. There, there is a sanctuary of a warlike goddess, who might be compared to Athena. The initiate, passing into it, must take off his own robe and put on the one which Cyrus wore before he became king, and after eating a cake of preserved figs, chew some terebinth and drink cup of sour milk. If they do anything else in addition to these things, it is unknown to others. (Plutarch, *Life of Artaxerxes* 2.3.1–3)

⁹⁰ One of the older traditions of scholarship assumed the towers served the Achaemenids as fire altars or fire temples (theories reviewed in Schippmann 1971, pp. 194–95; Potts 2007, pp. 282–85). Several scholars, including Herzfeld (1908), Demandt (1968), and Boyce (1975b, pp. 457–58), argued that the Zendān and Ka‘ba were tombs, despite the fact that all tombs

of the Persian kings are accounted for. Frye (1974, p. 386) and Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1983) viewed the towers as treasures for royal paraphernalia or as “coronation towers.” For useful reviews of the literature and the various interpretations of the structure, see Gropp 2004 and Potts 2007.

⁹¹ Garrison forthcoming.

The word *hieron* could refer either to a sanctuary precinct or perhaps a specific structure, though in a vaguer sense than *naos*. Providing a little more context, the text goes on to relate that a courtier accused Artaxerxes II's brother, Cyrus the Younger, of plotting to sneak into the sanctuary to assassinate the king during his initiation. Cyrus was accused of "planning to lie in wait in the sanctuary (*en tōi hierōi*) and, when the king removed his robe, attack and kill him." The vague wording of the passage makes it possible that he simply entered the precinct, the Zendān itself, if indeed it was a part of this sanctuary, or another structure (*Life of Artaxerxes* 2.3.3–5). Be that as it may, it is highly unlikely that Cyrus or his accusers would have thought it possible for someone to hide their incongruous presence even for an instant in a 3.7-meter-square chamber.

No archaeological or textual evidence securely attests to what the chambers of these towers held. While they clearly were not built to contain a fire, most of the other suggestions that scholarship has put forward are indeed tenable and should be kept as possibilities. The towers could have held some important object or set of objects, including royal initiation paraphernalia, a cult object or, at a later date, even a figural statue of the type introduced by Artaxerxes II, even if they were not originally constructed for that purpose. In fact, none of these conjectures are mutually exclusive, but any attempt to defend one single interpretation should be reserved until the areas around the towers have been fully excavated, even though the present generation might not live to witness it. Whatever their exact function, it is clear that the Ka'ba and Zendān were unique. Though Persian towers have generated several reconstructive fictions, no structure like the Zendān or Ka'ba has been discovered at any of the other Achaemenid royal residences or provincial capitals.⁹² And while a handful of structures evoke them, such as the Persepolis Fortification Archive sealing and Anatolian tombs, we cannot securely speak of a widespread tradition of sacred tower architecture outside of Pārsa.⁹³

Although temples (*ziyan*) did not play a prominent role in Persian religion as documented in the Persepolis archive, a few tantalizing hints suggest that Pārsa might not have been

⁹² No Achaemenid-era structure that decisively functioned as a temple has been excavated in the Caucasus. In contrast, Urartian temples with similar ground plans but much different elevations and functions were widespread in the region in the Urartian period and these appear to have inspired cult activity and construction after the Achaemenid era (Gagošidze 1983, 1992; Knauss 2005, p. 202). After a period of neglect in the Achaemenid period, an Urartian temple at Armavir was reoccupied in the Orontid period along with other structures on the citadel. It must be stressed that this was a regional architectural tradition with Urartian roots and not evidence of the spread of structures similar to the two Achaemenid towers from Persia (Tirats'yan 1988, pp. 82–83; 2003a, pp. 98–99; 2003b, pp. 130–31). Soviet archaeologists excavated the partial foundations of a fifth- or early fourth-century B.C.E. ashlar structure at the Georgian site of Samadlo, which stood on top of the hill situated on the banks of the River Kura. The excavators only excavated a single side but nevertheless reconstructed it as supporting a

tower similar to the Ka'ba and Zendān (Gagošidze 1996; Tsetskhladze 2001). Soviet archaeologists also reconstructed a structure at Uplistsikhe to resemble the Achaemenid towers in Pārsa, with only scanty evidence, while an Urartian-inspired temple would make equal sense.

⁹³ While it did not necessarily retain their original Achaemenid significance, this visual culture of reverence continued after their fall. The reverses of most of the Fratarakid coins portray a worshipper venerating a coffered tower with crenellations. These numismatic representations evoke the representations on the Persepolis Fortification sealings and Daskyleion reliefs, and many have likened them to the Ka'ba and Zendān (Potts 2007, pp. 296–97). The Sasanians, however, built tower monuments at Paikuli and Dum-e Mil that evoked these Achaemenid towers (Canepa 2010b, pp. 588–89). The Ka'ba in particular served an especially important role in the Sasanians' efforts to negotiate a meaningful relationship with the half-understood Achaemenids and the remnants of their empire.

entirely devoid of temples. Three tablets from the Persepolis Fortification Archive use the word *ziyan*, though none document that ritual occurred at them and only one connects the word with a toponym. Unfortunately, this place name, Harkurtiš, is not otherwise attested in the archive or located.⁹⁴ If they did not arise from a scribe's idiosyncratic desire to use a specifically Elamite cultural reference to refer to different type of sacred site or structure (e.g., the Persian word **bagina*), these rare appearances of the word *ziyan* could perhaps attest to early Elamite temples that remained in service or a temple of an expatriate community. In this regard, a handful of temples to Mesopotamian gods seem to have existed on the Iranian plateau in the Median periods.⁹⁵ In the Achaemenid empire, expatriate communities, including Babylonians, Assyrians, and Greeks, brought their own religious traditions to Pārsa and constructed their own places of worship. It is clear that foreign gods were present in Iran but considered to be the internal affairs of expatriate communities. For the sixteen years of Darius I's reign that the Persepolis archive covers, we have no explicit record that these cults were integrated into or supported by the official state distribution system.⁹⁶ Eventually these gods began to receive some sort of patronage on the Iranian plateau, even just as a function of assimilation with Iranian gods such as Anāhitā and Auramazdā. A recently published Aramaic document mentioning an "offering for the sanctuary/altar (**bagina*) of Bel" (zwtr' l bgn' lbyl) might attest to the worship of this god in late Achaemenid Bactria and possibly, though not necessarily, a temple, as other references using the Iranian word **bagina* describe open-air sanctuaries.⁹⁷

In this light it is perhaps worthwhile to return to Xerxes I's "Daiva Inscription." Scholarship has often sought to attach various archaeological sites to Xerxes I's *daivadāna* passage, from the temple of Marduk in Babylon to the Parthenon in Athens.⁹⁸ However, the inscription itself describes the site and ritual in characteristically Elamo-Persian terms. The Babylonian version essentially calques it indicating it was a Persian concept. In describing the place, the Old Persian and Elamite versions both use the word *daivadāna* "place of the *daivas*," which the Elamite incorporates un-translated as *da-a-ma-da-na*, while the Babylonian version translates the term as *bīt lem̄nūti* "house of evil (creatures)."⁹⁹ According to the inscription, the *daivas* and Auramazdā were worshipped at exactly the same location, with exactly the same type of ritual: a *śip*, the specifically Elamo-Persian cultural and ritual idiom recognizable from the Persepolis archive.¹⁰⁰ In order to accommodate a *śip*, this site would most likely have been a sacred site of the type that we know accommodated other *śips*: an open-air sanctuary.¹⁰¹

In stressing that the sacred site and the ritual were Persian, this is not to say that *daiva*-worship or such actual site need ever existed or such an event ever took place, though it could have.¹⁰² As with Darius I's restoration of temples, such a localized rebellion might have

⁹⁴ NN 2240, NN 1670, NN 0486 in Henkelman 2008, pp. 121, 469–73, 547–48. Viewed optimistically, these few mentions of temples could perhaps attest to parallel temple economies that the Persepolis archive only peripherally perceived.

⁹⁵ Radner 2003a, 2003b.

⁹⁶ Henkelmann 2011.

⁹⁷ C1: 37–39; see Shaked 2004, pp. 16–18, 45–46; Henkelman 2008, p. 212. Alternatively, if it was not merely a convention of imperial Aramaic to refer to Auramazdā as Bel, this could have arisen from Bel's assimilation with Auramazdā in the late Achaeme-

nid period, anticipating Hellenistic developments (Grenet 1991).

⁹⁸ See Duchesne-Guillemin 1987 and Gnoli 1993b for the various sites attached to these inscriptions.

⁹⁹ XPe 30, XPa 30; Herzfeld 1938, p. 33; CAD L s.v. *limnu*.

¹⁰⁰ Duchesne-Guillemin 1987; Gnoli 1993b; Henkelman 2008, p. 473.

¹⁰¹ XPe 30, 32, 33, 34, 41, 44. See below on evidence of the *śip*.

¹⁰² Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1989.

taken place; however, it could be more useful and appropriate in such an inscription to present it as an open-ended statement of good, divinely inspired kingship. Like Darius I's *āyadāna* passage, if he wished to, Xerxes clearly would have named the land of the quashed rebellion with the same level of specificity as that with which he named all the lands that bore him tribute at the inscription's start. The fundamental goal of the *daivadāna* passage was not to record events but to impose a religious duality on political activity in the realm: the king worshipped Auramazdā and the Great God guided his actions. Any rebellious person or province worshipped the *daivas* and the *daivas* were behind any rebellion against the imperial order.

The Achaemenid archaeological, archival, sigillographical, and textual evidence details a coherent repertoire of official Persian cult activities and sacred spaces. The most important and widespread of these were open-air sanctuaries. Paradises and palatial grounds accommodated cultic activity and fire altars, tombs, and sacred towers also served as ritual focuses. No evidence at all attests to Achaemenid fire temples. While we have vivid evidence of a repertoire of Achaemenid cult activities performed at a variety of sacred spaces, at this point we cannot speak of a widespread, unified, and replicated tradition of official Persian temple architecture implanted throughout the Achaemenid empire. This, of course, may change if further excavations yield more structures that correspond to known official sacred architecture, such as the towers or QN3. But rather than trying to fill the void with late antique forms or single examples, we should concentrate on the considerable evidence we do have.

New Traditions of Iranian Sacred Architecture in the Middle Iranian Era

Despite certain continuities, the Seleukid era oversaw massive changes across Iran and Western Asia and this holds true for sacred spaces as well. A widespread tradition of temple architecture only appears across the Iranian world with the rise of the Seleukid empire.¹⁰³ These architectural forms were not exclusive to Iranian cults, but appear in temples dedicated to a variety of deities throughout the Seleukid empire. What is significant, however, is that this is the first time we have substantial evidence for temples in the Iranian world. After a hiatus stretching from the fall of the Achaemenids through the early wars of the Successors, under Seleukos I (310–281 B.C.E.) Western Asia again experienced a fluorescence of building and city foundation. Seleukos I and his successors undertook an ambitious and successful program of city foundation that integrated new Seleukid traditions into the urban and religious life their vast empire.¹⁰⁴ With metropolises like Seleukeia-Tigris, the Syrian Tetrapolis, important satrapal capitals like Dura Europos in Syria and Ai Khanum (Āy Kānom) in Bactria, temple complexes like Takht-e Sangin (Takt-e Sangīn) on the Oxos, and re-founded Achaemenid cities like Seleukeia-Eulaios (Susa), the early Seleukids created a new metropolitan and provincial topography of power that integrated yet ultimately superseded that of the Achaemenids.¹⁰⁵

Seleukid architectural forms transcended all previous and contemporary traditions, be they Babylonian, Persian, or Macedonian. In cities that had a long tradition of sacred

¹⁰³ Canepa forthcoming c.

¹⁰⁵ Canepa forthcoming c.

¹⁰⁴ Mairs 2007, 2008; Leriche 2007a, 2007b; Held 2002; Briant 1978; Cohen 1978.

architecture, for example, at Athens or at Uruk in Mesopotamia, the Seleukids built or rebuilt important sanctuaries engaging indigenous forms (fig. 14.14g).¹⁰⁶ In regions that did not have a well-established temple tradition, like the Iranian plateau, or in newly founded cities, like Dura Europos, the Seleukids introduced new forms that had a long and lasting impact (fig. 14.14c-d). Founded by Seleukos I about the same time as Seleukeia-Pieria and Antioch-Onantes (ca. 300 B.C.E.), Ai Khanum is particularly important for the study of Seleukid Asia. It remains the most thoroughly excavated Seleukid foundation from the Upper Satrapies and has yielded the best-preserved Seleukid sacred architecture from the Iranian lands.¹⁰⁷

In the early Seleukid era several monumental temples with a number of shared characteristics appeared at roughly the same time in Syria, Mesopotamia, and along the Oxos River valley in Bactria. This is the first time where a unified, empire-wide tradition of sacred architecture encompassed the Iranian lands. For many years archaeologists and historians of art and religion have debated the origin and relationship of temples with similar features excavated at sites across Western and South Asia. The original excavators and later students of these sites in Bactria recognized that the basic ground plans of these temples resembled those of Seleukid-era temples from Mesopotamia and Syria.¹⁰⁸ As new archaeological discoveries have been integrated into scholarship, a clearer view of the relationship between these structures has emerged.

In the Persian Gulf, Iran, and Bactria, a few smaller structures appear using traditional Greek architecture with Persian architectural elements integrated into the structure's architectural members or ornament. The Ionic temple with Achaemenid-style bases on the island of Ikaros provides a good example of this phenomenon.¹⁰⁹ Traditional Greek temple architecture only appears in two structures dedicated to the cults of heroized or divinized dead: the heroön of the city founder, Kineas, and that of another unknown individual and his relatives (*mausolée au caveau de pierre*), possibly that of a post-Seleukid, Greco-Bactrian ruler.¹¹⁰ The fact that these structures were built or rebuilt at roughly the same time as the city's temples indicates that all architectural options were open to the builders. For whatever reason, patrons or the citizens of Ai Khanum deemed traditional Greek temple architecture appropriate for the funerary *temenoi*, and the "mixed" Seleukid official architecture appropriate for structures dedicated to the worship of gods. Much like major Seleukid palaces, the largest and most important structures utilized an official architecture that deliberately and harmoniously incorporated Greek, Babylonian, and Persian architectural features to create something quite new.¹¹¹

The temples of Zeus and Artemis at Dura Europos, the temple dedicated to the River Oxos excavated at Takht-e Sangin, the Temple with Niches and the Temple Outside the Walls at Ai Khanum all contain monumental architecture combining elements of these architectural traditions (fig. 14.14a-e).¹¹² The rectangular shape of their sanctuaries with antechambers (*pronaos*), a cult chamber (*naos*) often divided into multiple units or flanked with "sacristies,"

¹⁰⁶ S. Downey 1988, pp. 7–50.

¹⁰⁷ Bernard 2008; Coloru 2009, p. 149.

¹⁰⁸ Bernard 1976a, 1981, 1990; Schippmann 1971; Stronach 1985; S. Downey 1988; Hannestad and Potts 1990; Rapin 1992; Lindström 2009; Mairs, in press; Leriche 2010; Shenkar 2011.

¹⁰⁹ Jeppesen 1989. On the mausoleums, see Canepa 2010b.

¹¹⁰ Bernard, ed., 1973, pp. 85–102 and 115; see the chronological chart p. 104. Bernard et al. 1976, pp. 25–39.

¹¹¹ Kopasacheili 2011; Canepa forthcoming c.

¹¹² Lindström 2009, pp. 129–31; Rapin 1992, p. 118.

reflect, but do not fully replicate, the internal features of varieties of Babylonian temple architecture. Babylonian temples normally contained these cultic spaces within larger complexes rather than centralized, freestanding structures. The exterior walls of these Seleukid temples often incorporated decorative niches, reflecting Babylonian treatments, combined with Greek architectural ornament. Their columns, bases, and capitals could incorporate both Persian and Greek forms. These structures put a Seleukid royal imprint on the civic cults of many regions' metropolises and several satrapies most important provincial cults.

Only a few clues exist regarding the nature of the cult or cults practiced in the Bactrian temples, and none of them conform strictly to any single religious tradition. For example, the colossal cult statue that appeared in a later phase of Ai Khanum's Temple with Niches (Phase II) had the iconography of Zeus.¹¹³ While the statue received Greek cult, the sanctuary integrated a water channel and a series of libation jars buried in the crepis behind the temple suggesting Iranian religious practices.¹¹⁴ This suggests that there was nothing contradictory about using Greco-Macedonian forms for venerating gods associated with an originally non-Greek cult.¹¹⁵ Bernard discovered no evidence associated with the Temple Outside the Walls that provides a clue as to the nature of the deity or deities worshipped in the temple. Despite recent assertions, the Oxos Temple at Takht-e Sangin clearly did not host anything resembling a Zoroastrian, ever-burning fire cult in the Seleukid era. Altars excavated in the front of the temple resembled Greek altars.¹¹⁶ Overall, the dedications correspond to Greek cultic practices, though names associated with them are just as often Iranian as Greek.¹¹⁷

Although the archaeological and textual evidence is fragmentary, a number of open-air cult sites that were important in the Achaemenid era received temples in the Seleukid and Parthian era, even post-Achaemenid Persepolis (fig. 14.14i). We have hints of these sites in classical textual sources, including Polybius, who describes the current condition of Hellenistic Iran; Arrian, who describes events during Alexander's campaigns; and Plutarch, who purports to describe events in the Persian empire or conquest of Alexander, though writing in the Roman period.¹¹⁸ This body of textual sources comes from the early Roman period, well after the fall of the Achaemenid empire. It is only at this point that we begin to hear mention of "sanctuaries" (*hiera*), or, more rarely, a temple (*naos*). In Media, textual sources suggest that the Seleukids maintained (and periodically plundered) a temple to Artemis/*Anāhitā* near Ecbatana.¹¹⁹ Unfortunately, no archaeological evidence of this structure has been discovered to corroborate the textual evidence. It is significant, however, that sources mention a temple

¹¹³ Only fragments of the cult statue survive, including a left foot measuring 27 cm in length, indicating the statue was seated. The sandal on the foot carries a thunderbolt (Bernard 1969, pp. 313–55, esp. 338–41, figs. 15 and 1).

¹¹⁴ Bernard 1970, pp. 300–49, esp. pp. 327–39; Bernard 1974, pp. 280–308, esp. 294–98; Francfort, Ligeron, and Valence 1984, pp. 81–84.

¹¹⁵ Mairs, in press.

¹¹⁶ Litvinskij and Pičikjan 2002, p. 90.

¹¹⁷ Lindström 2009.

¹¹⁸ For example, Antiochos III despoiled silver tiles and the gilded column revetment from the peristyle of the "Anais" temple (*naos*) at Ecbatana (Polybius, *Histories* 10.27.2). Macedonians encountered a sanctuary (*hieron*) to "Artemis" on Ikaros, which contained wild goats (Arrian, *Anabasis* 7.20.3–4). Artaxerxes II makes Aspasia a priestess of "Artemis of Ecbatana, whom they call Anaitis" (no direct mention of a temple or reference to a "sanctuary") (Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 27.4). Sanctuary (*hieron*) of Anaitis (Isidore of Charax, *Parthian Stations* 6).

¹¹⁹ Strabo, *Geographia* 11.13.5. Seleukos I: Pliny, *Natural History* 6.17.

in this region only from the Seleukid era on.¹²⁰ Bard-e Nešānda and Masjed-e Solaymān, two sites that both featured stone terraces, flourished well into the Seleukid and Parthian eras (fig. 14.14j–k).¹²¹ Although the terraces might have originated in the Achaemenid era, temples appeared on them only in the Seleukid and Parthian eras. They have often been associated with the temples whose treasure Antiochos III and Antiochos IV tried to expropriate. If one day new archaeological explorations could provide more conclusive archaeological evidence, we might then be able speak more conclusively about whether such highland Elamite *hiera* incorporated temples in the Achaemenid era.

Seleukid architecture offered a challenging departure point for early Arsacid and Kushan official architecture.¹²² Nisa, in present-day Turkmenistan, was the first imperial capital of the Arsacid dynasty of Iran (ca. 250 B.C.E.–ca. 226 C.E.). While “New Nisa” refers to the actual city on the plain below, “Old Nisa” refers to the city’s fortified hilltop complex that hosted several monumental structures created in a succession of phases.¹²³ Old Nisa likely began as a fortress, though later the Arsacid king of kings Mithradates I (reigned 171–138 B.C.E.) re-founded it and converted the site to a ceremonial center that honored the memory of the Arsacid kings.¹²⁴ While their exact function is still debated, several structures at Nisa clearly departed from Seleukid sacred and palatial architecture.¹²⁵ They incorporate porticos, niched wall treatments, and central halls with four columns all decorated with Hellenistic architectural ornament and statuary. Beyond the imperial capital, a number of provincial sacred structures featuring a four-columned hall, central entrance portico surrounded by sacristies or ambulatories appear in the Parthian period at Susa, and Fratarakid Persepolis, among other sites.¹²⁶

Seleukid architectural forms had a long history in Bactria after the province became independent and informed those of the Kushans. The original temples of Ai Khanum were rebuilt several times on similar ground plans after the city became the capital of the independent Kingdom of Bactria. Newly built temples that emerged during this period, such as that of Delberjin (fig. 14.14h), reflect the basic forms of those at Ai Khanum and Takht-e Sangin. This ground plan reappears in the first-century B.C.E. temple of Mohra Maliran at Taxila, in present-day Pakistan.¹²⁷ After the fall of the Greco-Bactrian kingdom, the life of Ai Khanum and its temples came to an end when the city was destroyed around 145 B.C.E. However, the temples of Takht-e Sangin and Delberjin were rebuilt several times under the Kushans on similar plans.¹²⁸

¹²⁰ Stronach 1985, pp. 619–22; Rapin 1992; Brown 1998. The standing remains of Kangavar, once thought to be those of the Seleukid temple, have been securely dated to the Sasanian era. It is questionable whether the site supported a temple at all and if this was the site of the temple mentioned by Isidore (Azarnoush 2009; Kleiss 2010).

¹²¹ Potts 1999, pp. 371–73.

¹²² Michels 2010; Dąbrowa 2010; Invernizzi 1994 [1996], 2001, 2005.

¹²³ Final publication: Invernizzi 2009; Invernizzi and Lippolis 2008.

¹²⁴ Invernizzi 2001, p. 134; Lippolis 2009.

¹²⁵ Invernizzi and Lippolis 2008, pp. 83–166, 265–82, 374–75 (though with caution with reference to the temple at Kuh-e Kʷāja). Reflecting Parthian innovations, a 17-meter-diameter mudbrick structure, “The Round Hall,” belonged to a later phase. It was linked to the Red Building by corridors and three passages (Invernizzi and Lippolis 2008, pp. 7–81).

¹²⁶ Shenkar 2011, p. 132; Rapin 1992, pp. 122–23.

¹²⁷ Rapin 1995.

¹²⁸ Delberjin’s ceramics and the iconography of the Dioskouri painting associated with its earliest layer cohere better with a Greco-Bactrian versus a Kushan date; see Shenkar 2011, pp. 120 and 124–25; Bernard 1994, 1990.

The Kushan sanctuary at Surkh Kotal, built between 128 and 132 C.E., contained at its core a temple that departed from the architectural tradition begun by Seleukids and mediated by the Greco-Bactrian kingdom. Called by its creator *Kaneško-oanindo-bagolaggo* “the Sanctuary of Victorious Kaniška,” Surkh Kotal consisted of an artificial terraced mountain ridgeline with a multi-level stairway leading up the mountain’s eastern side.¹²⁹ The main temple (“Temple A”) was a centralized, peripteral mudbrick and timber structure that rose in the center of the courtyard on a 47 × 40-meter brick podium (fig. 14.6). Although the site’s excavator sought to find an example of a pre-Sasanian fire temple in the main temple at Surkh Kotal, he found no evidence of a Kushan fire cult.¹³⁰ This central cult room contained a .90-meter-high stone plinth that measured 4.25 × 4.25 meters and whose corners each carried large column bases. The ground plan corresponds closely to previous Bactrian temples, though here the “sacristies” have been converted to a continuous ambulatory corridor, a hallmark of later Iranian architecture. This ambulatory surrounds the *naos*, which housed a cult statue or statues, the likely purpose of the central plinth at its center. Like the Oxos Temple of Takht-e Sangin, the *naos* featured four columns.

The Achaemenid tradition of open-air sanctuaries did not disappear after the fall of that empire. Indeed, many of the sites that were important in the Achaemenid era continued to be places of cult in the Seleukid era and beyond, and new open-air enclosures or hilltop sanctuaries continued to be built. On the southwest edge of Ai Khanum’s acropolis excavators discovered a large stepped podium located in the center of a sanctuary courtyard. This platform has been linked with similar structures discovered in Bactria and Iran and associated with open-air worship as described in classical authors.¹³¹ The site of Bīsotūn continued to host cult activity and royal rock reliefs and inscriptions attest to its importance into the Seleukid, Parthian, and Sasanian eras.¹³² At a certain point in the Seleukid era the sanctuary became associated with Herakles-Wahrām. According to Tacitus, writing about the cult in the Parthian era, the priests, once bidden by the god through a dream, would release a riderless horse with a quiver full of arrows into the surrounding mountains.¹³³ The horse would return exhausted and without the arrows and the god then would reveal the location of his slain quarry through another dream. At the southern entrance to the precinct, where the wall met the cliff, a Seleukid official created a high relief of a reclining Herakles. An inscription in Greek and Aramaic accompanied this relief indicating that the intended audience was not just the Macedonian elite.¹³⁴ In this same area Arsacid kings of kings carved several of their own rock reliefs, marking and claiming the sanctuary.

Strabo and Pausanias describe sanctuaries (*hiera*) of the Persian gods in Anatolia drawing in part from their firsthand experiences of local “Persian” cults in Cappadocia and Lydia, respectively.¹³⁵ In these passages, which provide evidence for the later development of Iranian cults in Roman Anatolia, Strabo describes “the tribe of the Magi called ‘Fire Kindlers’ (*Pyraithroi*), who are numerous in Cappadocia,” while Pausanias mentions “Lydians called

¹²⁹ SK 4 in Schlumberger, Le Berre, and Fussman 1983–1990, vol. 1, pp. 11–20, 31–48, 49–62, 63–65 107–132.

¹³⁰ Fussman 1989, pp. 197–98. The later temples housed fire cults, but were built in the ruins of the sanctuary after its original cult had ceased to function (Schlumberger, Le Berre, and Fussman 1983–1990, vol. 1, pp. 28–29).

¹³¹ Bernard 1976b, p. 307; S. Downey 1988, p. 75.

¹³² Diodorus, *Bibliothēkē* 17.110.5; Isidore of Charax, *Parthian Stations* 5; Bernard 1980; Tubach 1995.

¹³³ Tacitus, *Annals* 12.13.

¹³⁴ Kleiss 1970; Luschey 1974, 1989.

¹³⁵ Mitchell 2007, p. 160.

Persians.” Throughout his histories Strabo uses the word *heiron* to refer to all manner of sacred sites, but in this passage he specifies these as “fire sanctuaries” (*pyraitea*), which he describes as open-air enclosures (*sēkoi*). Strabo states: “[...] in the midst of these there is an altar, on which there is a large quantity of ashes and where the Magi keep the fire ever burning.” Although he opens the section by paraphrasing Herodotus, and states that Persians do not use altars or statues (but omits “temples”), he goes on to say that:

These same things are observed in the sanctuaries (*hiera*) of Anaïtis and Omanos; and these have sacred enclosures (*sēkoi*), and people process a wooden statue (*xoanon*) of Omanus. I have seen these things myself, but those other things and what comes next are mentioned in the histories. (Strabo 15.3.13–20)

Instead of mentioning a temple or a building when reporting about Achaemenid-founded sacred sites, Strabo speaks only of open-air sanctuaries, for example, the hilltop sanctuary at Zela (Strabo 11.8.4). He emphasizes that the most significant features of these sacred precincts were their enclosures that contained an altar in the middle. The only source that mentions, albeit cursorily, some sort of structure used in an Iranian cult is Pausanias:

[...] the Lydians, who are called Persians, have sanctuaries (*heira*) in the city of Hierokaisareia and in Hypaipa. In each of the sanctuaries (*heira*) there is a shrine (*oikēma*), and in the shrine there is an altar with ashes on top. But the color is not like ashes, but something different. A magus, having entered the shrine and piled dry wood on the altar, first puts a tiara on his head and then sings an invocation to some god in a barbarous language completely incomprehensible in Greek. He sings while reciting from a book. It is necessary that the wood is kindled without fire and that brilliant flame blazes forth from the wood. (Pausanias 5.27.5–6)

Earlier interpretations of this passage have interpreted the *oikēma* as a small structure or room contained *inside* a larger enclosed temple like a *cella* in a Greek or Roman temple. This is not indicated in the text and without any archaeological evidence whatsoever of such larger “fire temples,” it is safer to assume that Pausanias describes precincts containing altars like Strabo but with a small structure containing or acting as a covering for the altar. The unresolved dissonance between Strabo’s summary of Herodotus and his own observations points to changes in Iranian religion between the Achaemenid empire and the Middle Iranian era. It also alludes to the fact that Iranian religious practices diverged markedly over the former lands of the Persian empire, with influences from dominant or neighboring cultures contributing to the process. In fact, some have argued the cults of “Persian Artemis” and “Artemis Anaitis” very likely did not originate from Iranian cults at all, but were rather the result of persianization of pre-existing Greek cults adding some Iranian cultic activities and titles to Greek cults of Artemis.¹³⁶

No temple ground plan has been discovered or excavated at Hypaipa or Heirocaesarea from any period. The few fragments of architectural ornament are entirely from the Roman era.¹³⁷ The only explicit evidence of temples (though *not* fire temples) built for these “Persian” goddesses, “Persian Artemis” and “Artemis Anaitis,” appears in the Roman period on coins. Generic representations of a tetra- or hexastyle, gabled Greco-Roman temples appear

¹³⁶ Brosius 1998.

¹³⁷ Reinach 1886, pp. 16–18; Weber 1892, p. 8.

on early imperial coins similar to other stereotyped numismatic representations of a temple.¹³⁸ An earthquake devastated this region in 17 C.E. and it was heavily rebuilt through the munificence of the emperor Tiberius, for which reason the city changed its name from Hiera Komē to Hierokaisareia (Hierocaesarea).¹³⁹ It is not too much of a stretch to see the cult statues of the Persian Artemis given new, standard Roman temples and cult statues of the sort reflected in the coins. But without archaeological evidence we must not close off the possibility that these were simply stereotyped numismatic symbols of some other cult site, not “portraits” of actual structures.

Like the Orontids of Armenia and Commagene, the kingdom of Pontos had its roots in the Persian satrapies of Cappadocia and Phrygia and its dynasty claimed both Achaemenid and Seleukid descent.¹⁴⁰ Their kings were more Hellenized than the early Orontids and adopted aspects of contemporary Macedonian kingship. Later, the most important Pontic king, Mithradates VI (reigned 120–63 B.C.E.), incorporated and foregrounded Iranian kingship. After driving out the forces of Lucius Licinius Murena,

[Mithradates VI] offered sacrifice to Zeus Stratius on a lofty pile of wood on a high hill, according to the fashion of his country, which is as follows. First, the kings themselves carry wood to the heap. Then they make a smaller pile encircling the other one, on which they pour milk, honey, wine, oil, and various kinds of incense. A banquet is spread on the ground for those present (as at the sacrifices of the Persian kings at Pasargadae) and then they set fire to the wood. The height of the flame is such that it can be seen at a distance of 180 kilometers from the sea, and they say that nobody can come near it for several days on account of the heat. Mithridates performed a sacrifice of this kind according to the custom of his country. (Appian, *The Mithridatic Wars* 66.83; trans. Horace White)

Several scholars have noted the parallels with the šip sacrifices at Pasargadae.¹⁴¹ Whether this was the result of direct continuity, vague cultural memory, or creative reinvention is not clear, but the overall effect and significance makes perfect sense within Mithradates VI’s ideological program of championing both the Hellenic and Persian traditions against the Romans.

The Seleukids introduced a tradition of dynastic cult where the Macedonian elite revered the king, his family, and ancestors along with dynastic gods.¹⁴² Nisa was important to the development of the Arsacid dynasty’s experiments with dynastic cult partially inspired by Seleukid royal cult.¹⁴³ A domed structure at Nisa (the Round Hall) contained a portrait of Mithradates II and, along with other structures at the site, hosted some sort of cult activities connected to the memory of the kings of kings. Documents from the site indicate that the names of a number of estates and vineyards were named after living and deceased kings.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ Imhoof-Blumer 1895, pp. 309–26; Mitchell 2007, pp. 159–60.

¹³⁹ Boyce and Grenet 1991, p. 225; Mitchell 2007, pp. 159–60.

¹⁴⁰ Mithradates VI boasted equally of his royal Persian and Macedonian descent, counting as ancestors Cyrus, Darius, Alexander, and Seleukos I (Justinus, *Epitome* 38.7.1; Mitchell 2005). On Pontic religion and temples, see Saprykin 2009.

¹⁴¹ Henkelman 2012.

¹⁴² Canepa forthcoming b.

¹⁴³ Dąbrowska 2011.

¹⁴⁴ The economic documents from Nisa record deliveries from estates dedicated to the kings Priapatius (ca. 191–76 B.C.E.), Mithradates I (ca. 171–38 B.C.E.), Artabanus I (ca. 127–24/3 B.C.E.), and Gotarzes I (ca. 90–78 B.C.E.), who appear to have been alive when the endowments were created and perhaps founded them during their lifetimes (Canepa forthcoming b).

Ostraka from Nisa document delivery of goods from these estates and it has been argued that they supported some sort of cult for the memory and the benefit of the king's soul.¹⁴⁵ Without any other information, we can only speculate on the presence of cult activities in the various structures of Old Nisa. In the same region, at the village of Asaak, Isidore of Charax reports that a perpetual fire was kept burning to commemorate the site where Arsakes was first recognized as king, thus creating a larger topography of memory celebrating the dynasty (*Isidore of Charax, Parthian Stations* 11). Like Parthian Nisa, Surkh Kotal was one of several Kushan dynastic sanctuaries that responded to the new, Seleukid-inspired Middle Iranian tradition of honoring kings and dynastic gods.¹⁴⁶

The Persian tradition of sacrifices offered at funerary monuments or memorials continued in the Middle Iranian era, though reinvented and dramatically changed through an integration of Hellenistic cult and artistic elements. Interestingly, many of these, especially in the west, were variations of open-air sanctuaries. The Seleukid and Arsacid precedents inspired a variety of dynastic sanctuaries across the Parthian world including that of Shami in Elymaïs, Armenia, Pontos, and the *hierothēsia* of the border kingdom of Commagene.¹⁴⁷ Intriguingly, the new Arsacid practices appear to have augmented indigenous Persian traditions that stemmed from the Achaemenid satrapal roots of many of these dynasties. While we do not have corroborating archaeological evidence, textual evidence suggests that the Iranian kings of Armenia incorporated these newly emerging Iranian royal cultic practices by at least the end of the Arsacid era. The basic elements of the dynastic sanctuary of the Armenian kings, consisting of an open-air sanctuary, statues of the king, the king's ancestors, and the gods, and cultic activity.¹⁴⁸ Only under Arsacid influence does the additional element of the "ever-burning fire," appear at Armenian sanctuaries.

Like Armenia, the kingdom of Commagene (162 B.C.E.–17 C.E.) stood in a precarious place between the Roman and the Arsacid empires. It was one of the last Persian-Macedonian courts of this region to survive the coming of the Romans. The royal dynasty of Commagene had its roots in the Persian Orontid dynasty; however, as a Seleukid province, Commagene became heavily Hellenized. Iranian cultural forms regained prominence in the first century B.C.E. as part of a deliberate policy on the part of the central court to underscore the kingdom's ancient roots that transcended Seleukid, Arsacid, or Roman claims in the region. Antiochus I (69–34 B.C.E.), the kingdom's main innovator in cult and artistic activity, established open-air dynastic sanctuaries called *hierothēsia* at a number of important sites within his kingdom, including the citadel of Arsameia-on-the-Euphrates (Gerger, Adiyaman province, Turkey) and Arsameia-on-the-Nymphaios.¹⁴⁹ The supreme site was the *hierothēsion* at Nemrud Dağı, situated on the most prominent mountain in Commagene. In addition to more frequent, small-scale sacrifices, these sites hosted colossal communal feasts funded by the king recalling (though not replicating) the *śip*.

¹⁴⁵ Boyce implies that the Nisa documents specifically refer to fires dedicated for the soul of the king, but ostraka contain no such mention of either (Boyce 1986; Canepa forthcoming b).

¹⁴⁶ Canepa 2010a, forthcoming b.

¹⁴⁷ Canepa 2010a, 2010b, forthcoming b.

¹⁴⁸ Movses Khorenats'i, 2.12 (trans. Thomson 2006, p. 146); 2.40 (trans. Thomson 2006, p. 179); 2.49 (trans.

Thomson 2006, p. 187). Compare Agathangelos 817–18 (trans. Thomson 1976, p. 355, and p. 491 n. 1); Canepa forthcoming b.

¹⁴⁹ For an overview of the dynasty, see Facella 2006, pp. 250–97; Canepa 2007. For an introduction to the archaeology and religion, see Jacobs 2011; Mittag 2011; Wagner 2000; Sanders 1996; Waldmann 1991.

Conclusion

While many of the sites and structures dealt with in this study have, in the past, been called fire temples, archaeological evidence of monumental Zoroastrian fire temples only appears unproblematically and in abundance in the Sasanian era (224–642 C.E.). The ranks of pre-Sasanian fire temples have thinned considerably as old sites have been subject to new dating technologies and more critical analyses.¹⁵⁰ Although scholars have attempted to do so before, it is still too early to write definitively about the early development of the pre-Sasanian Zoroastrian fire temple. Of the temples mentioned in this study, none originally were created as fire temples although a few were adapted to this function at a later date with the Sasanians' influence or compulsion. Those pre-Sasanian structures that have been reliably dated and show secure evidence of a fire cult follow a different architectural tradition unrelated to that of Achaemenid or Seleukid sacred architecture.¹⁵¹

While it likely had roots in late Parthian architecture, the Sasanians were responsible for the ultimate spread of a different type of sacred architecture that became closely associated with the new fire cult: the centralized, domed čāhār tāq. The čāhār tāq appears in grand palatial architecture under Ardashir I and was likely employed as a new, standard type of fire temple during the early Sasanian empire as well. These are ubiquitous throughout the province of Pārs (Pārsa), appearing in both big and small structures. Several grand, monumental sanctuaries that the Sasanians sponsored outside of Pārs incorporate this new style of temple architecture for the new orthodox Sasanian fire cult.¹⁵² This new type of fire temple architecture and fire cult imprinted a variety of sanctuaries as the Sasanians systematically seized or destroyed all sites and traditions that could buttress a claim to royal power.¹⁵³ These included sites with connections to the Achaemenids, like Persepolis and Naqš-e Rostam, new royal cities such as Ardashīr-Xwarrah and Bay-Šābuhr, and sites outside of their Persian homeland built to embody the mythological locations and traditions of the Avesta. All are characterized by an incredible juxtaposition of continuity and innovation. For example, the Sasanians' memorial cults in their homeland show incredible continuity with the šumar/bašur cults of the Achaemenids, though the Sasanians put a sacred fire at their center.¹⁵⁴ Their radically new architectural and ritual forms made primordial Iranian epic and religious traditions tangible at sites such as Lake Kayānsīh at Kuh-e K̄wāja and Ādur Gušnasp at Takt-e Solaymān.¹⁵⁵ Some of these, like Kuh-e K̄wāja, show signs of an effaced Parthian (though not Achaemenid) presence. Others, such as the sanctuary of Ādur Gušnasp at Takt-e Solaymān, the Sasanians built at sites with no previous cultic or monumental activity. Although these sanctuaries were all newly built, they provided the Sasanians a no less powerful experience of the primordial pan-Iranian past and their place in it. This paper certainly does not present the final word on the development of Iranian temples, and new archaeological discoveries will surely enhance, if not transform, our understanding of the problem. However, it is my hope that if and when new evidence comes to light, such a re-evaluation can proceed unencumbered by earlier historiographical and theoretical burdens.

¹⁵⁰ Radiocarbon dating has proven that the complex at Kuh-e K̄wāja dates to the late Parthian or early Sasanian period. The architectural and sculptural features of the standing remains cohere better with Sasanian art (Ghanimati 2000; Canepa forthcoming a).

¹⁵¹ Betts and Yagodin 2007; Kaim 2004.

¹⁵² Canepa forthcoming a.

¹⁵³ Canepa 2010b; Huff 2008.

¹⁵⁴ Canepa 2010a.

¹⁵⁵ Canepa 2010b; forthcoming a.

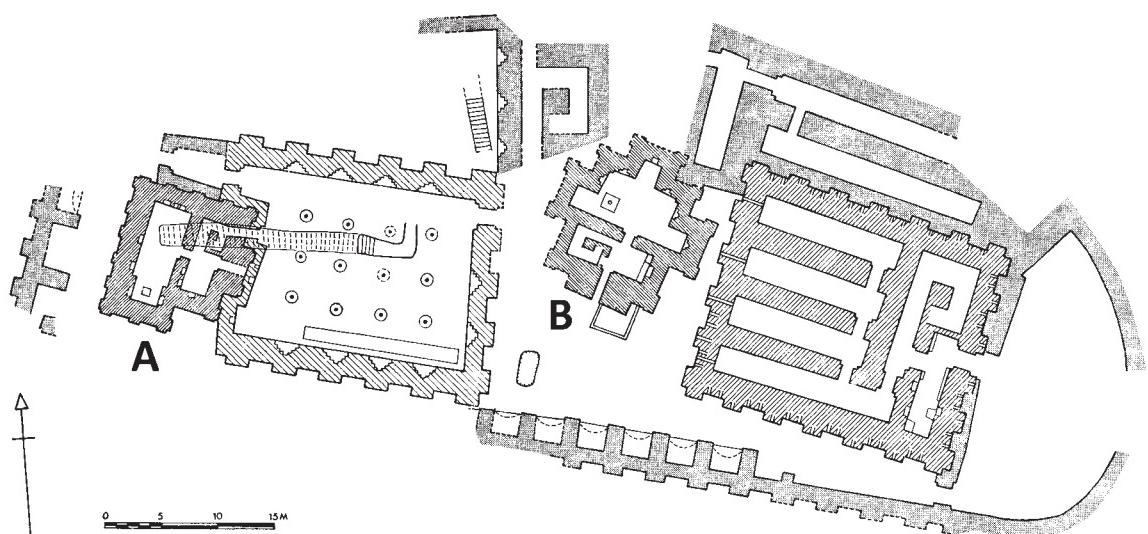


Figure 14.1. Plan of Tepe Nuš-e Jān. A: “Western Temple”; B: “Central Temple”
(after Stronach and Roaf 2007, fig. 1.9)



Figure 14.2. Tomb of Cyrus, Pasargadae



Figure 14.3. Rock-cut tombs at Naqš-e Rostam. Right to left: tomb of Darius I, tombs attributed to Artaxerxes I and Darius II



Figure 14.4. Persepolis. Rock platform and foundations in front of the tomb attributed to Artaxerxes III



Figure 14.5. Relief from Daskyleion portraying sacrificial scene
(Istanbul Archaeological Museum inv. no. 2361)



Figure 14.6. Relief from Daskyleion portraying male figure with *barsom*
(Istanbul Archaeological Museum inv. no. 5391)

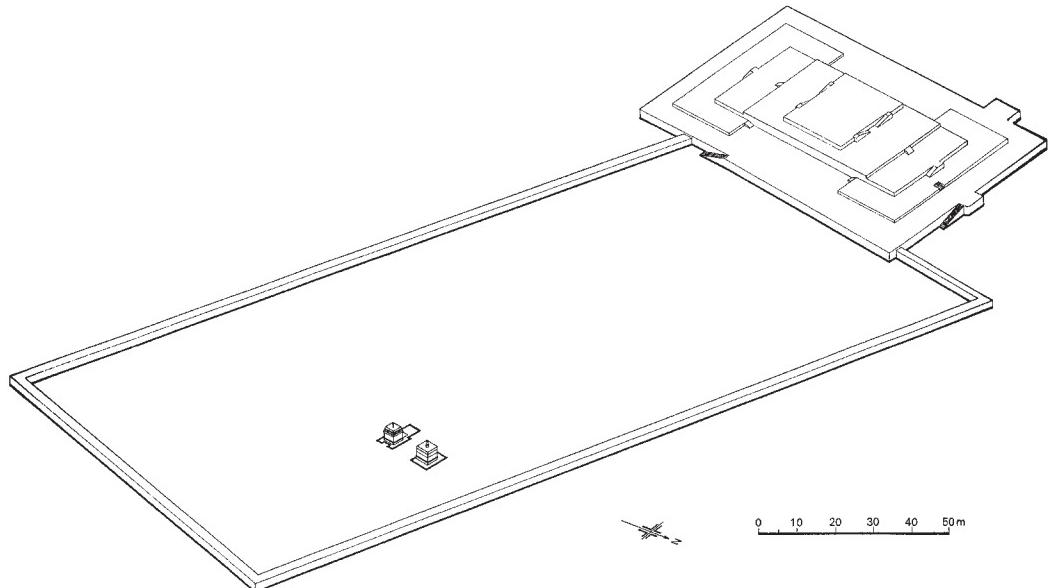


Figure 14.7. Plan of the sacred precinct at Pasargadae (after Stronach 1978, fig. 74)

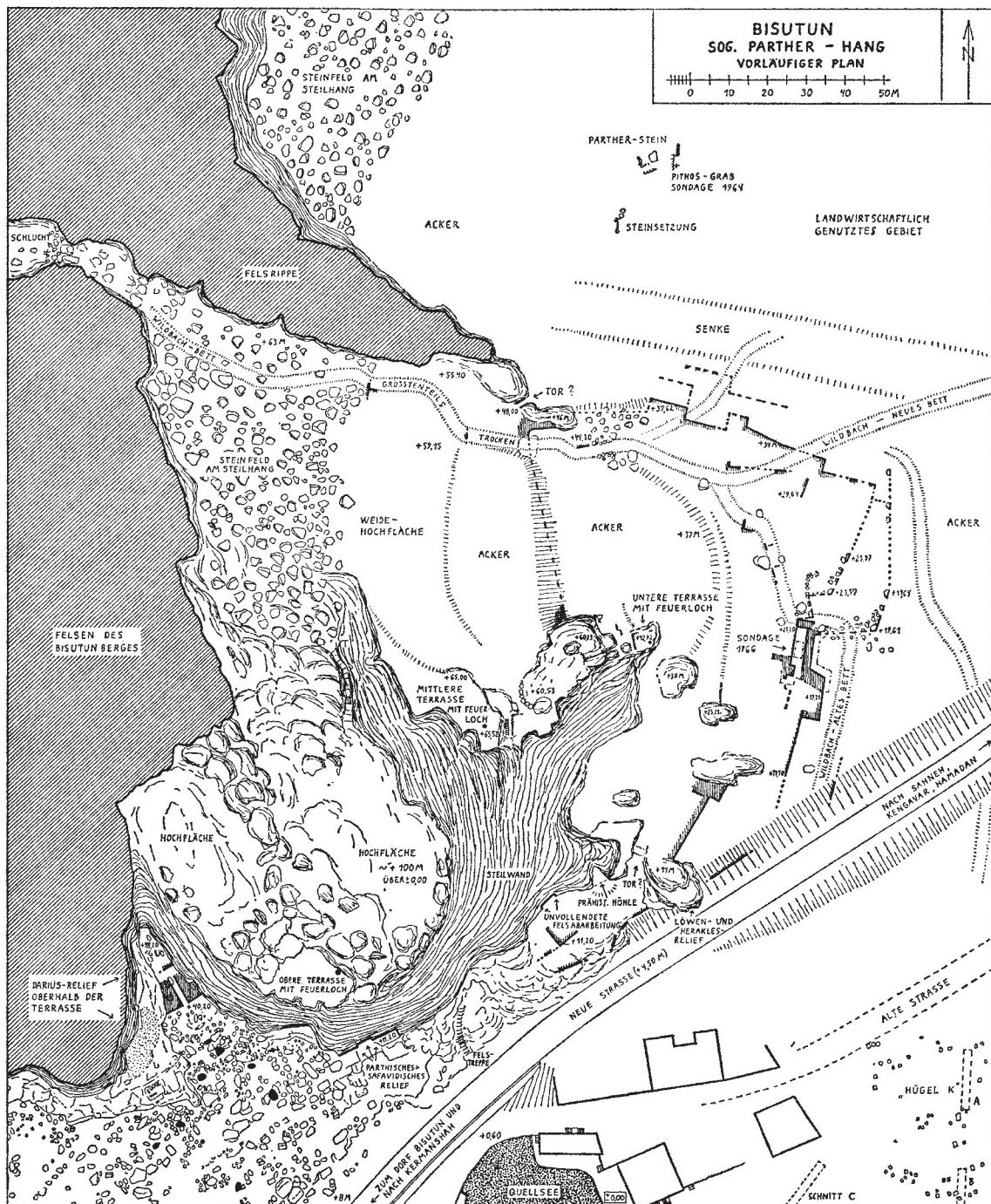


Figure 14.8. Plan of Bisotun (after Kleiss 1970, fig. 2)

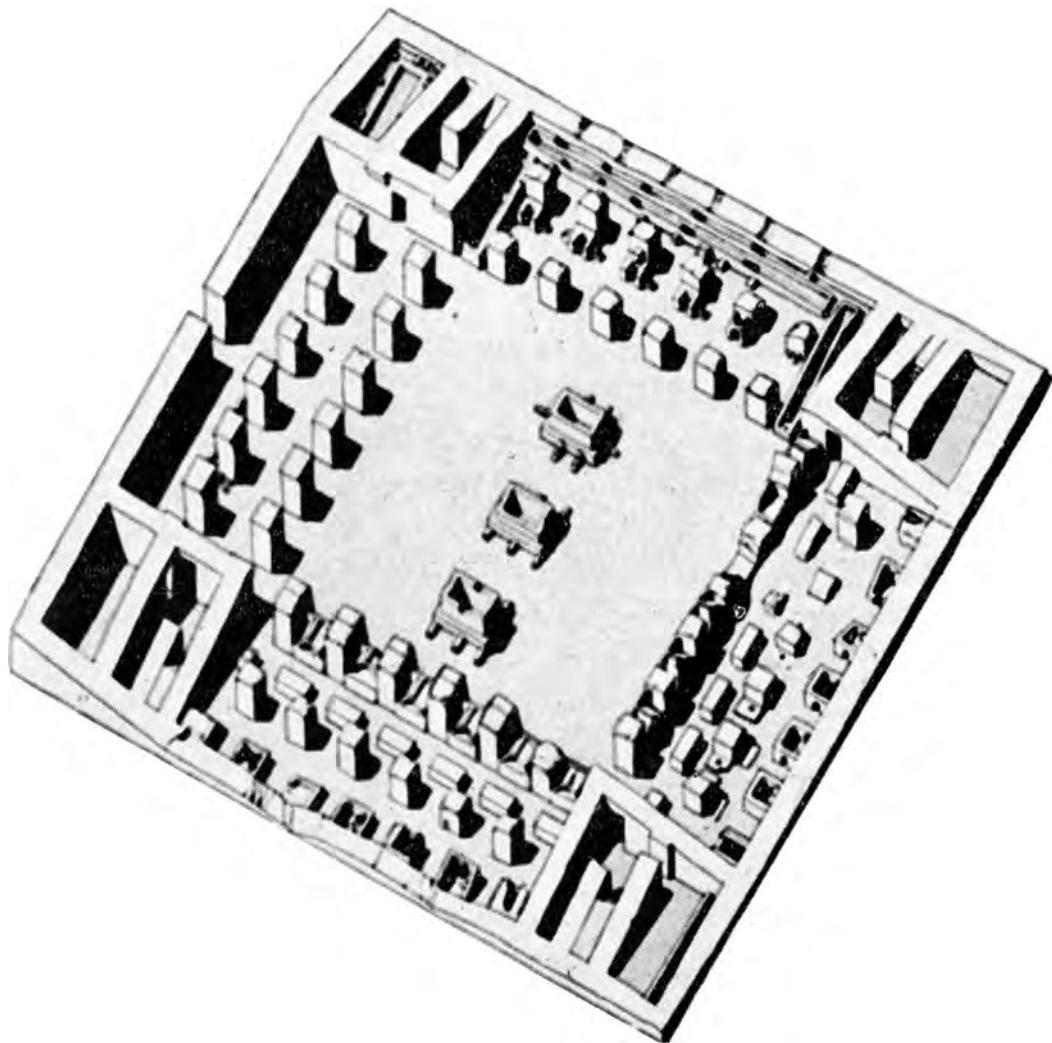


Figure 14.9. Isometric plan of QN3 Dahan-e Ġolāmān (after Scerrato 1979, fig. 9)

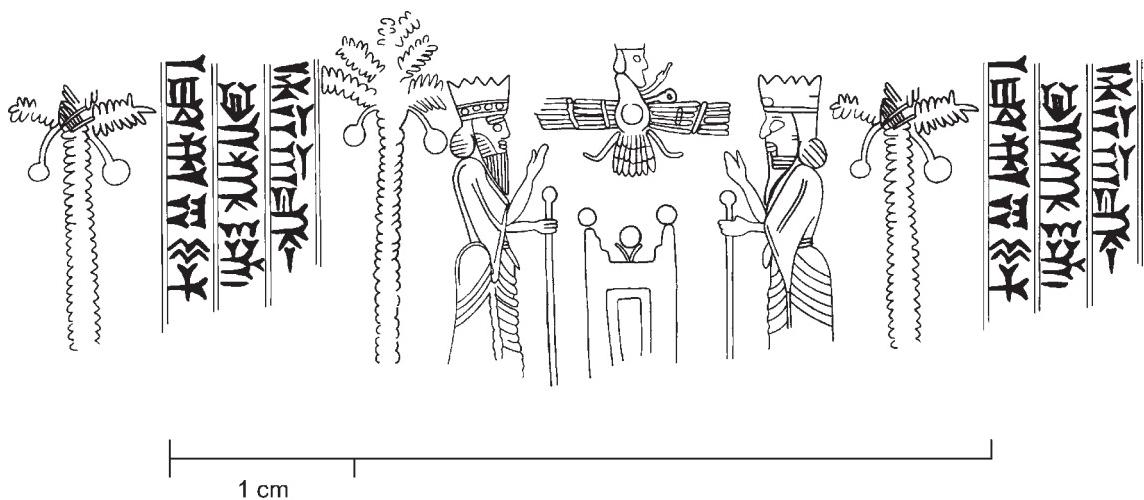


Figure 14.10. PFS 11* (courtesy of the Persepolis Fortification Archive Seal Project and the Persepolis Fortification Archive Project)

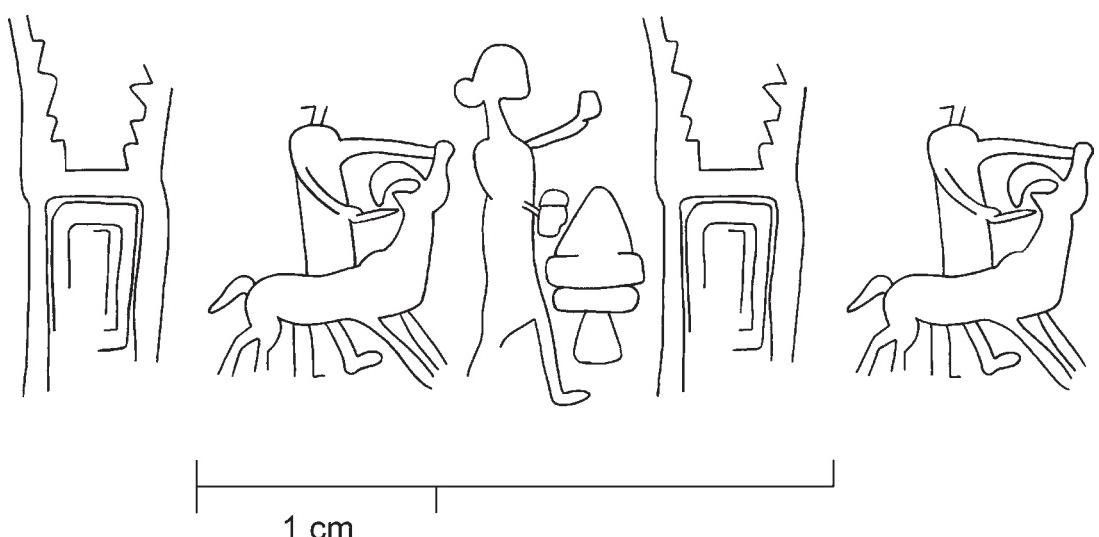


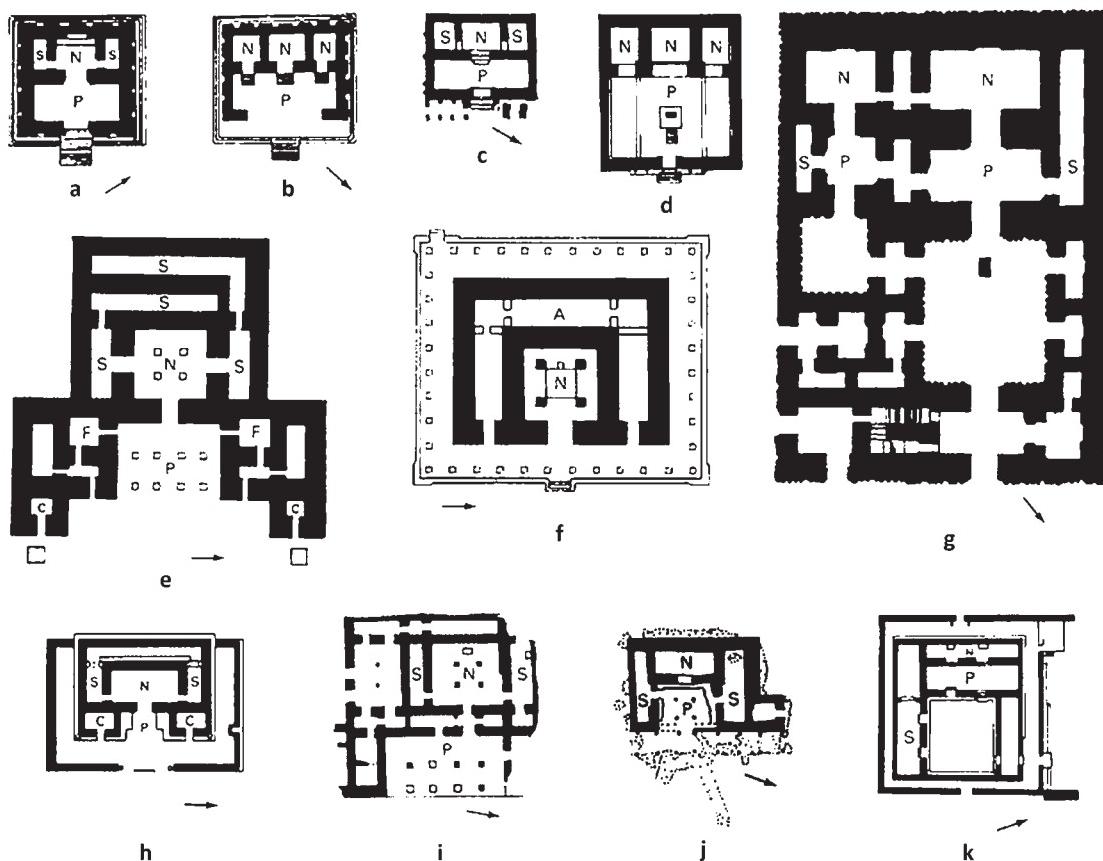
Figure 14.11. PFUTS 147 (courtesy of the Persepolis Fortification Archive Project)



Figure 14.12. View of Pasargadae with the remains of the Zendān-e Solaymān (lower right), the palatial district and garden of Cyrus (middle), and the tomb of Cyrus (upper left)



Figure 14.13. Naqš-e Rostam. View of the Ka'ba-ye Zardošt from above



Legend

- A Ambulatory
- C Chapel
- F Later fire emplacement (not part of original construction)
- N Naos
- P Pronaos / Antechamber
- S "Sacristry"

Figure 14.14. Temple ground plans (adapted from Rapin 1992)

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| a. Temple with Niches, Ai Khanum | f. Main Temple, Surkh Kotal |
| b. Temple Outside the Walls, Ai Khanum | g. Seleukid Anu Temple, Bit Reš, Uruk |
| c. Temple of Artemis, Dura Europos | h. Delberjin |
| d. Temple of Zeus Megistos Dura Europos
(rebuilt on the Seleukid plans) | i. "Fratarakid Temple," Persepolis |
| e. Temple of the Oxos, Takht-e Sangin | j. Bard-e Nešānda |
| | k. Masjed-e Solaymān |

Abbreviations

CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> , A. Leo Oppenheim et al., eds. Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1956–2010.
FrGrH	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> , Felix Jacoby, ed. Leiden: Brill, 1923–1958.
PFA	Persepolis Fortification Archive

Achaemenid Inscriptions

The general system to refer to Achaemenid inscriptions consists of three letters. The first indicates the king (e.g., X = Xerxes); the second the site (e.g., S = Susa); the third is added to distinguish inscriptions of the same ruler at the same site.

DB	Darius I, Bīsotūn (“Bīsotūn Inscription”)
DS	Darius I, Susa
XP	Xerxes I, Persepolis

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